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further analyse and think about the teachings and then, finally, engages in the actual meditation. This is a very unique process that helps us to increase our intelligence or wisdom. As I remind people again and again, we need to develop that sort of intelligence or wisdom as a way to assess whatever situation we may be in, or whatever activity we wish to undertake. It is really important that we have our own resources to assess situations properly rather than having to always rely upon others. I am not implying that we shouldn't seek advice from others. Of course we can seek advice from others, but ultimately we need to be capable of deciding for ourselves what actions to take and what to discard.

At a practical level, I particularly remind the younger generation, again and again, that it is really important to understand that when you are young you are quite vulnerable to being persuaded or influenced by others. As there is a danger of being easily influenced by others, one needs to take the initiative, when one's mind is still fresh, to develop one's inborn intelligence or wisdom to the extent that one is able to make correct decisions for oneself.

A very practical example of this decision-making would be choosing a good companion, a girlfriend or boyfriend. It seems that parents can be very apprehensive and worried about who their children are going out with, and whether their child is being influenced in a wrong way. If they have a daughter they might wonder if whether or not she has a good boyfriend who is honest, good and trustworthy. If they have a son, they might wonder whether they have a good girlfriend. This is something that parents seem to be very concerned about. The less able the children are to decide well for themselves the more it causes parents to worry. Parents who know that their children are able to discriminate well for themselves are less worried. They would say, 'We know that they will make the right choices. They are an honest person and they will be able to make the right choices.' These are just some practical and relevant examples for us.

However, what we need to consider is that we need to be able to assess any activity well before we engage in it, because it is a matter of fact that anything that we engage in has its pros and cons. There are always opposing factors and contributing factors in completing any activity. We need to gain the intelligence or wisdom to identify the contributing factors and adopt the conducive factors, and to try to discard those factors that are detrimental to one's activities. If we are able to assess the situation in this way with our own wisdom and intelligence, then we won't be in danger of being influenced in a wrong way and we will be able to make the right decisions for ourselves. This is an important practical point that I wish to emphasise.

I particularly make this point to the younger generation, because this is really a crucial point in life where, if you set your priorities right and discipline yourself to be focusing in the right direction, it will help you throughout your life. This means taking the personal responsibility to develop that intelligence or wisdom within yourself, because it is so easy to be influenced by others and unfortunately there are many types of

influences these days that can mislead us. The advice or suggestion I am trying to share here is something that I feel would be very useful in your life and create a long-term benefit. The teachings mention that the bodhisattvas rely on inner wisdom and method. We should take that as an example for our everyday life situation as well.

So what is the method and wisdom that bodhisattvas rely on? The method of a bodhisattva's practice, which we can take as an example for ourselves, is summarised into love and compassion. The wisdom is a higher wisdom, a deeper, profound wisdom that understands reality. That is what the bodhisattvas rely upon and we need to use this example as an important guide in our life too.

What I am sharing here is not just mere words but is based on my own experience in my life. As I have shared previously, I left my home and my parents when I was barely 16 or 17 years of age and I was completely by myself from then on. I had to rely completely on my own decisions to pursue my studies. I never turned back and went home again, even for a vacation, because I considered my study important. As I grew up I faced many difficulties and hardships, and what has kept me going is my focus on what I thought was most important—my studies. It is the knowledge that I have gained from these studies that has helped me all the way through. It is based on that personal experience that I share this advice with you.

In his recent visit the Dalai Lama again encouraged the younger generation to focus on getting a good education. He considers that the most important asset for the younger generation and that the way to develop a better world is to have a good education. He is saying that out of a great concern and great wisdom. So it is good for us to pay heed to that advice.

His Holiness also shares that there are hardships and difficulties, but enduring those hardships and difficulties and willingly accepting them is one of the best ways to overcome them. We need to think about these words 'willingly accepting hardship is the best method to overcome difficulties'. It has a very profound meaning if we contemplate it deeply.

Willingly accepting hardships means that one is not daunted in the face of hardships and difficulties. If one does not willingly accept them then as soon as some small difficulties arise they will immediately be a reason for one to give up. If it is in education where there are some difficulties and one cannot willingly accept them, one will give up study and not go any further. Willingly accepting the hardship and difficulties means that when difficulties arise one will be able to accept them, because this is not unexpected and we can move on. It does not daunt one from going on with one's studies.

What helps one to continue to pursue one's goals, education for example, is the wisdom that is able to distinguish between the pros and cons of the studies and the value of education. Having analysed the situation one will know for oneself that even though there are difficulties and hardships there would be a great advantage to continuing your education, and that there would be disadvantages if one were to give up. The ability to know that comes from one's own wisdom. This

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is the connection with the earlier point about the need to increase our intelligence and wisdom through the practice of meditation. So, this all connects back to the importance of training the mind through meditation. That helps us to assess our situation and is an essential tool for our wellbeing.

Another way to understand the significance of meditation is that training of the mind helps to reverse or transform a faulty state of mind into a positive state of mind. It is important to understand how meditation training works for our betterment. It is a faulty state of mind that causes us to engage in all sorts of adverse situations. All sorts of mistakes in our life are based on a faulty state of mind. The way to overcome those faulty states of mind is to transform and replace them with a positive state of mind. Meditation achieves this by intentionally distancing our mind from focusing on states of mind or objects that are faulty and focusing instead on positive states of mind or positive objects. The training is a technique to familiarise our mind with focusing on positive thoughts. This is another way to understand meditation practice.

Meditation works to reverse or transform a faulty state of mind by training our mind to intentionally focus on an appropriate positive object that we have chosen. Having chosen the appropriate object to focus on, which is a positive object, the more one's mind is focused on that the more it helps the mind to become naturally clearer and sharper. This is because the mind is basically being reversed from a faulty state. By merely focusing on a positive object the faulty mind is naturally reduced because they oppose each other. A positive state of mind and a negative or faulty state of mind are mutually exclusive. Focusing on a positive object induces a positive state of mind that is a clear and sharp, as opposed to a mind focusing on a negative object which is ignorant and dull.

There is another example of how this works. Imagine two opposing factors: because they oppose each other when one is developed the other naturally reduces. When we develop love, anger naturally reduces because anger and love are mutually exclusive. They oppose each other. Love and anger cannot be together in one state of mind at the same time, so the more that love increases in one's heart or mind the more anger naturally reduces in strength and is overcome. It is in this way that we need to understand the process of meditation.

It is desirable for all of us to experience a state of mind where love starts to increase and anger starts to reduce. We all have the experience of being dominated by anger and know it is not a comfortable state of mind. We don't feel peaceful and relaxed when we are experiencing anger. Conversely, when we are experiencing true love and concern for others there is a warm, comfortable, happy feeling within us. Therefore a practice that helps to increase our positive experiences, such as increasing love and reducing anger, is something that we would all recognise as being beneficial.

There are numerous states of mind that we can identify as faulty, and for each faulty state of mind there is an opposing positive state of mind. It is a matter of identifying the positive state of mind. Some positive

minds are antidotes for overcoming a faulty mind. As we train ourselves and recognise the antidotes for overcoming faulty states of mind, it is in our interest to gradually start to implement those in our practice. It is in this way that we slowly develop and transform ourselves.

The purpose of our formal meditation session is to develop a state of mind to oppose a negative state of mind. The familiarity that we gain through formal meditation will assist us even when we are out of the meditation session and out and about in the outside world. Due to the familiarity we gain in our practice during the meditation session we will have easy access to a positive state of mind when the danger is even greater, i.e. outside of meditation. Various influences or distracting objects may cause us to develop a negative state of mind but we will have easy access to the opposing factor to that negative state of mind, which is a positive state of mind. That comes from our familiarity.

So it is really important that we understand the proper technique or method to engage in meditation. Those who are familiar with the meditation technique will have heard that there are two essential tools in securing our meditation practice as a proper one, mindfulness and introspection. Having applied these tools during the meditation session we will, due to that familiarity, have access to them outside of our meditation session. We will be able to maintain a sense of mindfulness and introspection throughout our life. It is these two tools, mindfulness and introspection, that will assist us to be cautious in whatever we do and not fall victim to our own negative states of mind or be influenced by others.

In our tradition these two tools are presented as essential. I have met others who have said that they have meditated for about 11 years but have never come across these tools. They have confided in me that it was amazing that they had missed that point and that these are essential tools, not only for meditation itself, but also outside meditation in our everyday life. Many people have made such comments. So it is very important that we recognise and cherish what is presented here.

*Mindfulness* is presented as a state of mind that, having recognised a virtuous object, constantly remembers that object and brings it to mind. Focusing on a virtuous object, whatever it may be, induces a virtuous state of mind and that virtuous state of mind is maintained through remembering the object again and again.

*Introspection* is a part of the mind that vigilantly keeps watch over one's overall state of mind to see whether it is focused on a virtuous object or not. When mindfulness notices that the mind has wavered from its focal object it brings its focus back. That is the function of introspection.

That is how one trains during a meditation session. Likewise when one comes out of a meditation session and is in one's everyday life one would be mindful of maintaining a virtuous, positive frame of mind. Introspection checks whether one is being mindful or not. It is even more important out of our meditation session to maintain that mindfulness and introspection or vigilance over oneself, particularly in relation to what are called the three doors—our physical actions, speech and thoughts. We engage in the world through our physical actions,

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speech or mind. Keeping a constant awareness of these areas is essential for one who is an earnest spiritual seeker or Dharma practitioner.

Having given a quite lengthy explanation of the relevance of meditation practice and the way it helps to develop and train our mind, we can now spend some time in formal, focused meditation. The object that we choose to focus on is our own breath. We then need to make the commitment to ourselves that for the duration of the meditation, the next few minutes, we will not allow our mind to be influenced by disturbing concepts or thoughts. We intentionally distance ourselves from all phenomena, whether they are thoughts or tangible objects, and bring our focus within. Having brought our focus within, we then place our entire focus, our full attention, on our chosen focal object, which is our own breath. We try to maintain our full awareness and focus on our natural breathing, the inflow and outflow of our breath, and keep our full attention and focus on that and nothing else. By doing this the disturbing concepts or destructive emotions within us naturally subside and the mind experiences a temporary tranquillity. This is something that we can experience when we apply this meditation technique in the proper way. So, for the next few minutes we will engage in this practice. (*Pause for meditation*)

That is sufficient for now. If you have any questions, please raise your hand.

*Question:* Geshe-la, as you described the specific functions of mindfulness and introspection very clearly. I'm wondering if there is a specific mental state which applies the antidote when the delusions arise in the mind.

*Answer:* The specific mental state that applies the antidote is called *application* and it occurs in conjunction with the function of introspection. As explained earlier, introspection is a state of mind that investigates whether the mind is being distracted or not. So it is introspection that recognises that the mind is distracted. Application then comes after the recognition that the mind is distracted.

It is the mind of introspection that recognises the fault and it is from that recognition that the next state of mind called application arises, which applies the antidote. For example, it is introspection that would recognise a mind of anger arising and with that recognition comes the knowledge that that which opposes anger is love, so love has to be generated. So it is introspection that is recognising that there is a fault and applying the antidote comes from that recognition itself. For example, if we were told to look for a certain person in town that we had never seen before we would be given a description of that person such as their height, their colour, their complexion, the kind of clothes they are wearing etc. When you go into town you would look out for this particular person by analysing the many people you see. That is what introspection is like. As soon as you see the person who matches the description you will immediately recognise them. 'Ah, this is that person that I was asked to look for.' So recognition follows from introspection. Does that help clarify things?

In a meditation session when the mind starts to waver and become distracted from the chosen focal object it is introspection that initially recognises that the mind has become distracted. The focus has wavered away from the object and gone outside, so the state of mind that applies the antidote is called application. It is application which, having recognised the mind has wavered away from its object, brings the mind back and focuses it on the object again.

Having used application and re-focused our attention on the object, if the mind wavers again soon after that then subtle excitement is occurring and that is much more difficult to overcome. If one does not maintain one's focus after reapplication and it focuses outwards again it becomes very difficult to maintain one's focus on the object. It is when we have not applied that application well initially that the mind loses its focus again. If it constantly wavers the mind can get into habitual state of readjusting its focus but losing it again and again, and that, in itself, becomes a habit. One may spend most of the time in a meditation session losing focus and reapplying it again and again. Outwardly it may seem you are meditating and others may think you are in deep meditation with a very focused mind, but in fact the mind is just busy with bringing the focal attention back and losing it again and again.

There is a danger of falling into this trap where the mind becomes habituated to constantly readjusting the focus. A meditation session becomes nothing more than just readjusting the focus again and again and we have not attained any duration of attention and focus on the object. Because of the danger of falling into this trap, the instructions in the teachings advise that when commencing meditation one needs to have a disciplined mind but also it is important initially to have short meditation sessions. It is emphasised that from the very outset it is very important to maintain quality rather than the quantity of meditation. If from the very start of one's meditation practice one has developed a strong discipline within oneself to maintain one's focus single-pointedly, even if it is for a minute, then one will set oneself on the right track. When there has been one minute of focus one should be satisfied with that and come out of the meditation session. The next meditation session may be for two minutes. As one learns to maintain one's focus, one will naturally be able to lengthen it. One should then be satisfied with that and come out of the meditation. If, from the very outset, one makes that firm decision and maintains one's entire focus on the object then that becomes a good habit and we will gradually be able to increase the span of our attention and focus on the object without being constantly distracted. This is how one needs to practice in the meditation session.

The teachings explain that a beginner needs a combination of analytical and single-pointed meditation. These need to be alternated in a gradual process, which means focusing on the object for a while and then coming out of single-pointed focus and analysing the object. Then one again focuses on the object single-pointedly for a short time and then comes out of that single-pointed meditation and analyses the object. By this process one

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will gradually increase the span of single-pointed focus while also being able to analyse as well.

Analytical meditation also needs to be a focused meditation. Beginners such as us will find that when we analyse something our mind stays on the object we are analysing for the duration. So it does keep our mind there. While we are analysing the object our mind is focused on the object. When we single-pointedly focus on the object we choose some particular aspect or feature of that object to maintain our single-pointed focus. When we alternate between analytical and contemplative meditation we can gradually progress in that way.

If we apply the method of analytical meditation in our work environment we would find that our work becomes much more successful. When we think about the task at hand and we think, 'OK, after this I have to do that' it is a very practical means to assist our work.

*Question:* Wouldn't it be necessary for us to recognise what the antidotes are?

*Answer:* Of course knowing the antidote means first being able to recognise the delusion. Often we fall victim to a delusion because we haven't even identified it as being a delusion or a faulty state of mind. So recognising what kind of delusion we have is the first step. When we recognise the delusion then we also need to identify what the antidote for that is.

For example, when strong attachment arises, the teachings advise us to think about the natural imperfections of the object as way to reduce attachment. When anger arises the teachings say to focus on love for the object, which will then reduce anger. When disturbing concepts arise it would help quieten our mind to focus on the breath. The breath is said to be an object that is very conducive for helping to settle the mind. The ultimate antidote for a dull state of mind or ignorance, particularly ignorance, is meditating on emptiness. Meditating on emptiness, which is the ultimate reality of phenomena, is said to be the antidote for overcoming all delusions. It is the ultimate antidote.

The antidote for pride is to contemplate the many categories of phenomena. For example, just thinking about an aeroplane is enough for us to lessen our pride. If we think we know a lot, just think about how the mechanism of an aeroplane works and that, in itself, is quite mind-boggling. In the past people were allowed to go into the cockpit and someone had booked that for me. So I was taken into the cockpit and I remember the pilot was very fond of me and said, 'Sit down'. Seeing all the instruments in the cockpit is mind-boggling. How do they work?

So, the practical antidote for pride is said to be to think about the many categories of phenomena. When we get a sense of pride, the sense that we feel we know everything, we should contemplate the things one does not know yet. There are many categories of phenomena that one does not have the faintest idea about and knowing that one does not know these things, naturally reduces one's pride. (*Geshe-la chuckles*)

Realising emptiness is the ultimate antidote for overcoming all delusions. All the delusions are said to

arise from a faulty mind and a misconception of things existing independently or inherently. It is based on the fundamental misconception that things have an independent or inherent existence, thus one starts to grasp onto objects. So, all forms of grasping or attachment or holding onto things as important comes from that basic fundamental delusion of seeing things as independent or inherently existent. So the mind that realises emptiness realises that there is no independent or inherent existence, this will naturally reduce that strong sense of holding onto phenomena.

Thank you very much. That was very good.

As usual we will end with a short meditation. This time the object that we will initially focus on will be the sound of Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra being recited. As we hear the sound of the mantra we try to maintain our full attention and focus on that very sound. Then, as the recitation subsides and we remain in silence we have a sense of vacuity, a sense of nothing, because the sound has stopped. We just have that blank state. Focusing on that blank state is also significant. Some people feel that this meditation is quite good because one does not have to exert oneself to try to pinpoint anything. They seem to relate to this meditation so it serves a purpose.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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