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us, so it is not as if what is being suggested here is totally out of the norm. Otherwise we wouldn't be able to relate to it. So, it is a fact that both love and compassion are within us already. We already have the seed or the potential of love and compassion within us. The teachings are a way to help identify love and compassion within us and further cultivate and develop it.

It is good for us to periodically think about these points; identifying what love and compassion are according to the explanations given in the teachings, and thinking about the ways of how to further develop and enhance it within ourselves. Compassion needs to be understood as a means to relate to other's suffering; it is a sincere wish to alleviate the suffering of others based on non-violence. This is based on the basic fundamental principle of not hurting others; practising compassion is to actively practise non-violence. Compassion is explained as the root of all happiness. So this is something we can relate to. The teachings present ways to extend compassion to all; however we need to relate to that by beginning to practise compassion on a daily basis with those around us.

Then we can see the wider perspective, for example, countries that are experiencing conflict and violence. A country that has a lot of violence is not a happy country to be in; it is as if the whole nation is in turmoil. And when you visit that place you wouldn't feel safe or joyful. I have heard from people who go to places that have a lot of violence and uncertainty, that it is hard to even have a good night sleep there. You never know when something could be stolen, or someone could violently take it away.

There are also accounts of travellers being robbed on trains. For example, in India I have heard of accounts of how even the local Indians don't trust each other because there is widespread theft. I have heard that when they need to go to the toilet if they are travelling by themselves, they leave their bags with a Tibetan if they see one because they seem to trust the Tibetans. As a general rule, the Tibetans are peace loving and honest, which is why others trust them. So in short, someone who actively practices love and compassion is naturally a radiant person, and someone who others feel comfortable with. By merely seeing them people feel happy.

The Indians know the honesty of Tibetans quite well. There is story about travelling on a train, in India. The trains have bunk beds, and there was an Indian on one side and a Tibetan on the other side. The Indian initially bought tea for the Tibetan when the tea came around. Next time, the Tibetan also bought tea for the Indian, but this involved getting his wallet. The Indian had deliberately bought the tea, knowing the Tibetan would buy some in return, and the strategy was to see where the Tibetan kept his wallet. Of course the Tibetan was naive and didn't have any suspicions at all. When the Tibetan went off to the toilet, his wallet was removed from his bag. Initially offering tea, seemingly out of goodwill but then actually to prompt the Tibetan to buy him a tea in return, and see where he kept his wallet was a very cunning strategy, using a lot of skill and reasoning.

There is a direct relationship between compassion and the practice of non-violence. Of course, practicing

compassion is not limited to just the act of refraining from violence. If that was merely the act of compassion, then the benefit of compassion might be quite limited. So we must understand that compassion goes beyond just refraining from violence. We need to understand that compassion is a state of mind where, based on refraining from violence, we actively do things to benefit other people. There are two aspects, not hurting others, as well as actively helping them. A practical example of how both love and compassion benefit others can be understood in relation to ourselves. When we are distressed and someone comes to our aid, they have a genuine sense of love and compassion for us. Whatever difficult situation we may be in or others are in, it is those people who have love and compassion for others that have no hesitation in helping. I regularly emphasise that we need to really cherish those who have love and compassion towards us. When there are clear signs of others having genuine concern for us, we need to acknowledge that and cherish them because they are really worthwhile people in our life. Our best friends are people who have love and compassion for us. So we can see how our parents need to be considered as our best companions and our best friends.

As for our compassion, we need to first of all identify an object that we can focus on that helps us to develop compassion. The object of our compassion is any living being who experiences any of the three types of sufferings: the suffering of suffering, the suffering of change and pervasive compounded suffering.

The *suffering of suffering*, which is also referred to the suffering of pain, is the obvious level of suffering that we experience, such as headaches, stomach aches, hunger and thirst. Any kind of physical or mental discomfort is classified as the suffering of suffering. Because that level of suffering is an obvious level of suffering that we can see and relate to when others experience it, we can immediately relate to that. We can understand and relate to people experiencing poverty or having any kind of physical pain, so our compassion in these cases comes about naturally; it is easy to feel compassion for the suffering of suffering.

The second level of suffering is the *suffering of change*, which initially feels pleasurable but then gradually becomes uncomfortable, then gradually turns into dissatisfaction and suffering. We do not experience the suffering immediately. But because of its nature, because it is not true happiness or pleasure, the initial pleasure is contaminated pleasure, so it is not a true happiness or bliss but rather in the nature of suffering. It is experienced as suffering gradually as it changes. We see many examples of this in our life, such as when we bought our first car. We are excited and happy to get a car and we feel pleasure, but only for awhile, because the car will start to have problems, and we start feeling a little bit agitated. Eventually cars can turn out to be a bit of a headache. What we experience initially as being pleasurable is now starting to give us problems and is turning to a misery. Another good example is being in the company of friends; at the start it can be fun, but if we are with them too long then it can start to become quite unpleasant.

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What we need to understand is that while the suffering of change is classified as suffering, it is an immediate pleasurable feeling that we experience. Feeling is categorised into three different types of feelings—the unpleasant feeling of suffering, the pleasurable feeling and the neutral feeling.

The first suffering, the suffering of suffering is an unpleasant experience. Whereas, for the second level of suffering, the suffering of change, the initial feeling that we experience is a pleasurable one. However, this pleasure is contaminated. The initial pleasure gradually changes into an unpleasant feeling. The reality of our situation is that our very existence means that we are bound to suffering that is disguised in the form of pleasure. And because we want to experience that contaminated pleasure, it brings us more suffering later on.

The more we think about our predicament and the more we contemplate the nature of this reality, the more it can prompt a deeper sense of compassion for other beings who are also in this predicament and who are also bound in this cyclic existence of having to repeatedly experience the suffering of change and the suffering of suffering again and again. Thinking deeply about this predicament is the main impetus for us to develop renunciation, the sense of wanting to be free from this existence of endless suffering. Focussing on others' suffering can be an impetus for us to develop compassion for them.

Perhaps I am being presumptuous here but I notice, for example that when marriage takes place, both people are feeling very happy and it's a joyous occasion. However, I feel this is not the beginning of happiness but rather the beginning of suffering. I might be presumptuous here, but I notice that there are many people who have a good relationship as companions before they marry but as soon as they get married it seems like they have lots of problems.

Indeed there have been many people who have confided in me that they had a good relationship with their partner before they were married and then as soon they got married, then they started having problems. So whatever the contributing factors, the reality of the situation is that there are too many high expectations from marriage, but people are just attached to the pleasures of cyclic existence. Investing our entire time and energy with such great expectations can bring us a lot of disappointment and suffering.

When the teachings describe the futility of the contaminated pleasures of our world, they are giving us the means to have a broader perspective and to have a deeper insight in seeing beyond fleeting immediate pleasure and try to put value onto something deeper and longer lasting. For as long as we are completely attached to these fleeting pleasures and are influenced by them, to that extent we will experience more and more suffering; more and more disappointment and dissatisfaction.

So we need to develop a sense of detachment towards the pleasures of cyclic existence as a way to develop renunciation. There is no real lasting pleasure in cyclic existence; there is no real happiness. Understanding this gives us a sense of security against falling completely

victim to the fleeting pleasures of cyclic existence, and we will become much more equipped in dealing with the ups and downs of life.

As we understand our own situation, we begin to understand others who are completely caught in the fleeting pleasures of cyclic existence; thus it is easier for us to develop compassion for them.

The third level of suffering is the *all-pervasive compounded suffering*. For example, our own body is in nature of pervasive compounded suffering. It's not an unpleasant feeling but classified as a suffering because of its very condition gives rise to suffering. All pervasive compounded suffering is a product of a previous delusion and karma. The moment our body was formed, it was produced in the nature of suffering, and is vulnerable to suffering.

The first suffering that we experience in relation to our body is the suffering of birth. It is said to be an incredible excruciating experience to be born. Then following birth, and throughout of our life, we experience periodically the suffering of sickness, which is definitely an unwanted suffering that we inevitably experience. And then eventually we start experiencing the suffering of old age. And then finally we have to go through the experience of death, which is another form of suffering.

So in brief these are the sufferings that we experience. These sufferings are experienced as a result of having a contaminated body. So we need to also further understand that this body is a product of previous delusions and karma. Our body also serves as a connecting factor to having to experience suffering of suffering and suffering of change and all pervasive suffering again in the future. So while the body now serves as product of previous delusions and karma, it is also serves as connecting factor for future existence of suffering. For as long as we are bound to this cyclic existence, we have to repeatedly experience the various types of sufferings again and again. This is the real predicament we are in as an ordinary being, as well as others who are also in the same boat. This reality in relation to others becomes a real impetus for us to develop a real deep sense of compassion for their suffering. The compassion that is developed based on this understanding is a much more profound level of compassion.

To develop this sense of compassion for others when we see their pain and suffering is common. We don't even need to contemplate and think about it, because it is something obvious—we can feel a sense of compassion for others when they are experiencing all forms of suffering of pain. But to feel the compassion in relation to suffering of change is even deeper and subtler than that. Developing compassion by contemplating the all pervasive compounding suffering of others, is again much deeper. The more we contemplate and think about this, the more profound and deep our level of compassion becomes.

We can further relate to the more profound level of thinking about the plight of other beings in relation to the all pervasive suffering. When we relate to the all pervasive suffering, we will come to notice that all beings

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in cyclic existence live alongside us in the same environment. We can relate that to animals as well in human existence, regardless of status and wealth and so forth. All humans are alike in having to experience all pervasive compounded suffering. And even higher forms of existences within cyclic existence, including the celestial gods, are in the nature of having to experience that level of suffering. Thinking like this encourages our mind to become much more expansive. It is not only beings who are experiencing immediate impoverished conditions, destitute and others who are experiencing hunger and thirst but all ordinary beings in cyclic existence are in the same plight of having to experience the all pervasive compounding suffering. Our scope of compassion becomes unbiased, focusing on all equally. And thus our compassion becomes much more pervasive and much more expansive.

This attitude helps us to broaden our perspective, broaden our view and directly combats our attachment. As attachment lessens, our mind loosens up. We don't hold onto things because we do not hold them in such high esteem. We now know that they are fleeting pleasures and not a true lasting form of happiness. Thus, anyone who is experiencing one or more of the three types of suffering can be an object of our compassion.

Before we conclude the session for the evening, let us take the opportunity again to spend a few minutes in meditation. This time, focus on the sound of the Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra. As we hear the recitation and the sound of that mantra, we place our full attention and focus on that sound. This means distancing our attention and focus on all other forms of distractions. Temporarily we'll leave everything aside and just focus on the sound. As the recitation subsides, and there is a sense of silence, hold that in our focus for a few moments.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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