



confidence. One will have the self-confidence to tackle and face any problem, endure any kind of hardship. It will help one to maintain a courageous mind and to not be overwhelmed. I am sharing these points because they will be helpful in living one's life in a meaningful way.

When we consider what it is that makes someone's life story particularly remarkable, it really comes down to how kind they were in their life! On the other hand, the life story of infamous people is based on the cruelty they had inflicted upon others. This is true, isn't it!?

Thus, one's own personal life story also depends on whether one has a kind mind or negative mind; that is the main point that we need to consider. If one thinks about this, one can learn a great deal about how to lead a good life.

Often people come to me and say they are quitting their job because they are having difficulties. What I ask them to consider is this: 'You might find difficulties in your work now but if you quit your work completely you might be facing even more difficulties. So you might want to weigh up which choice would be better.' When I present the situation to them in this way, after a while they say to me: 'Yes, Geshe-la, what you say is true.'

Now we will engage in meditation practice. The object we focus on for our meditation is our own breath. Again, we need to remind ourselves that we are doing this practice of meditation because we want to try to restore a sense of happiness, wellbeing and ease within oneself. If we were to consider why our mental happiness has declined, it is because, as mentioned previously, the mind is completely distracted outwardly, focusing on external things. This is what causes all the turmoil, the busy-ness and restlessness in one's mind. Therefore, the method to help overcome that is to maintain a focus inward rather than outward. Using the breath becomes an optimum object to focus on: we imagine seeing the breath as it comes in and goes out and we completely put our full attention and focus just on the breath and nothing else.

In order to apply the meditation technique fully, for the next few minutes we need to be committed and put our full attention and focus just on the breath, with a 100% focus on the breath itself. In this way, we will do the meditation. (*Pause for meditation*)

Just as we have attempted in our short session now, we can periodically adopt this meditation technique to calm down our minds, rather than allowing it to be completely obsessed with and distracted by external trivia. Normally if we spend all our time and energy on thinking about external trivia, the mind becomes more and more unsettled. So this technique is really useful.

Even in the midst of a busy life, one can find a short break to adopt this technique; even for two or three minutes, just focusing inwards and settling the mind will be really beneficial. If one cannot find the time to do a formal session sitting down on a cushion, it would be good to find just two or three minutes even during your break.

Sometimes when one is at work, trying to focus on something or thinking about some task that is very complicated, one might become quite tense and not be

able to cope with it well. At such times, one can leave everything aside for a few moments and try to focus inwardly on one's breath. This will help to settle down the mind, enabling it become clear again. From that clearer and less stressed state of mind, one can come back to the task and manage it more effectively. To that extent, the technique will be useful and beneficial.

#### 4.2.2.1.2.3. The way to train the mind in the stages of the path of beings of the great scope

##### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2. The actual paths

##### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2. How to develop an awakening mind

##### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1. The stages of training the awakening mind

##### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1. Training the mind in the pith instructions on the six causes and effect, which comes from the lineage traced to the great master Atisha

##### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2. Extensive explanation

##### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.2. The actual training in the stages

##### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.2.1. Training the mind to strive for the welfare of others

##### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.2.1.2. The actual development of the mind that strives for others' welfare

##### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.2.1.2.2. Cultivating compassion

##### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.2.1.2.2.3. The order of the meditation

##### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.2.1.2.2.4. The vital point of meditating in that order

##### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.2.1.2.2.5. How to meditate

The topic from the text is compassion. Earlier we talked about the object of compassion as well as what compassion is.

3. Now we come to the next subdivision, which is the **order of the meditation**. As explained in our earlier sessions, compassion is defined as a state of mind that, by focusing on beings who are experiencing suffering, wishes them to be completely free from their suffering. That state of mind is defined as compassion. Having defined what compassion is, the text now explains the order of the meditation.

The Tibetan word for compassion is *tsewa*. This word also has the connotation of not being able to bear it when, for example, there is a shrieking sound, like fingernails on a blackboard—the kind of sound you can't bear. So that Tibetan word, *tsewa*, has a connotation of feeling unbearable. Previous lamas have given an analogy of when we can't bear a shrieking sound; similarly, the attitude here is not being able to bear the suffering of others. So, when one feels true compassion in one's heart one will not be able to bear other's sufferings.

The meditation on developing compassion is presented in the teachings in this order. First one develops compassion for those who are close to oneself, such as one's relatives. Then, after one familiarises the mind with feeling compassion for those who are close, one's focus shifts to developing compassion by focusing on strangers, those who have never helped or harmed us, then we apply it to enemies – that is the order. This is the order presented by the great Indian master, Kamalashila, in his *Medium Stages of Meditation*.

4. The next outline in the text is the unique and **vital point of meditating in that order**. As explained, such an order is essential for developing compassion because,

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when one develops genuine compassion in relation to particular beings, it becomes easier to further extend it to other beings. Because of the familiarity and genuine compassion developed in relation to a particular being, it will become much easier for one to focus on a greater number of beings later.

If, for example, from the very beginning one instead had a general overarching feeling of love and compassion towards all beings, not focusing on a particular being, then it may seem like one felt a sense of love and compassion for others in general, but when any particular individual being came into one's focus, such as someone one had a disagreement with, or someone we consider an enemy, whatever sense of love and compassion we might thought we had will no longer be present. So the unique presentation of focusing first on one's relatives is because, in comparison with others, it is easier to develop compassion for someone one already feels close to. Therefore one meditates and develops a genuine, good and perfect compassion towards those who are relatives and other close ones. Then one slowly begins to focus on strangers, and due to one's acquaintance it will be easier to develop compassion towards them. Then one expands one's focus to disagreeable beings, such as one's enemy. In that way, it becomes a really firm and stable compassion, rather than being wishy-washy. If one begins one's meditation in an unfocused wishy-washy way, then one will not be able to develop a genuine, real, heartfelt compassion at any time, for any being. That is why this particular order is presented.

This is a practical technique because we can all recognise the fact that it is easier for us to develop a sense of concern for those who are close to oneself such as one's relatives. Naturally because they are close, one has an inclination to help them when they are in distress and alleviate any suffering, and help them to be happy. If we assume that we can generate love and compassion and benefit those who are faraway, who are not within our reach right now, that might be a good intention, but on a practical level we can't really benefit them as this is beyond our reach. But developing a genuine concern for those who are in our vicinity, our relatives and so forth, who are close to us and with whom we live our life is something that it is manageable, within our reach. Without having a sense of love and compassion towards them, there is no way we can actually benefit them because, as mentioned previously, a sense of love is wishing them to be happy, and compassion is where we wish them to be free from suffering. If we do not have that intention, there is no way we can really help them to be happy and free from suffering. This is how we need to implement the practice in a practical way, beginning with those who surround us.

It becomes a means to develop a genuinely good relationship with them too. If we have a genuine concern to help them when they are experiencing suffering, and to find ways of helping them to be happy when they are deprived of happiness, this will be really appreciated and acknowledged by the other. This then becomes a good way for one to co-exist with them. We have the great potential to do this; it is not beyond our capacity. We have the means and the potential to give that benefit.

Therefore it is worthwhile to utilise our potential. When the teachings mention developing love and compassion beginning with those that are close to oneself, it is very practical: because we have the means to do that, so applying this practice is most essential and of a great benefit. We need to really consider this.

5. The next topic outline is **how to meditate on compassion**. It is essential to reflect again on the importance of developing love and compassion within oneself. It is essential to develop love and compassion by thinking about their great benefits again and again. In contrast, we can contemplate the great disadvantage of losing that sense of love and compassion within oneself. The opposite to love and compassion is anger: think about how disastrous it would be to generate and maintain anger in one's mind. Those who are close to us, such as friends and relatives, will turn against us; they will not want to associate and be close to us, if we continuously express anger towards them. And those with whom we already disagree with will become even more distant. We need to, on the one hand think about periodically reminding ourselves again and again of how essential love and compassion are for one's life; and on the other hand, contemplate again and again the ill effects of anger.

To further emphasise the benefits, when one develops love and compassion towards others, naturally all of them will be drawn to one. It is like everyone will become your friend. As it is mentioned in the teachings, the Buddha has no enemies, everyone appears as a friend to the Buddha. That is because from the Buddha's own side, he has completely abandoned any ill-will or sense of hostility towards any living being; he only feels love and compassion for all beings. In the Buddha's mind, all beings are completely equal and endearing. On our level too we need to recognise the great value of love and compassion. We consider anyone who extends love and compassion to us as very precious, someone who is valued in one's life. We need to cherish them—rather than being hostile towards them and making them become distant to ourselves. We need to recognise any individual who shows a true sense of love and compassion to us and cherish them, really value them. We definitely need them in our life, for our own betterment.

Thus by paying attention to, and really recognising the values of love and compassion, we become inclined to further develop it. We already have that basis within ourselves but we need to further strengthen it. The only way to do that is by again and again reminding ourselves of the great value of love and compassion and of what a great loss it would be if they were to decline within us. On a practical level we can do that.

I mentioned earlier cultivating a good state of mind as opposed to harbouring negative states of mind. The good mind I was referring to is this state of mind of love and compassion. If we don't think about it and pay attention to its value, then, unfortunately, we will not be able to naturally recognise love and compassion as being essential. As humans we should be able to relate to that. Even animals recognise the value of love and compassion. We can see how much worry that animals

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such as pet dogs and cats have when their owners are not around. When their owners are kind to them and give them food and show them affection, even animals can relate to the great affection and the care that is extended to them. So when the owners are not around, we can see they are in great distress because they feel suddenly deprived of that person who has shown them affection.

In fact there is a story people have related to me, a movie about a dog who was separated for ten years from his owner but later came to be reunited with the owner, and recognised them and showed great signs of affection. The individual who related it to me was saying it was such a moving story, that it brought tears to their eyes. Although I hadn't watched it, I can truly relate to it. When this person was relating this story to me during lunch, they started becoming teary. I couldn't understand the full extent of what they were explaining but I could relate to it.

I have heard that the person who made this movie is Japanese. Some of you must have seen that movie yourself. In any case, the main point is that even an animal such as a dog shows such affection towards an owner that even after the owner has died or passed away, after ten years they still remember and recognise them; that affection is something remarkable. We can all learn from it. These accounts of animals showing great affection are something we as humans can learn from and something that we need to adopt and really apply in one's own life.

Relating this back to the great value of someone who extends their love and compassion towards us, we should really cherish them and not give them up. If we were to lose them from our life, if we became distant from such individual who showed us great love and compassion, that would be an extremely great loss on one's own side. Therefore as we develop love and compassion ourselves, we need to cherish those who show genuine love and compassion towards us too. That is the main point to emphasise here.

Before the evening concludes, we can again spend a few minutes in meditation. This time, we focus on the sound of the mantra to be recited, which is Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra. As we hear the sound, we place our full attention and focus on the sound of the mantra and when the recitation subsides, we just maintain that sense of awareness for a few moments.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

*Transcribed by Su Lan Foo  
Edit 1 by Mary-Lou Considine  
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe  
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