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be quite common to talk about meditation these days. Beyond it being just a trendy thing, it is actually something that people have found to be a beneficial practice. That is why I usually urge people, particularly the younger generation, to take some interest in meditation, which encompasses looking within and checking one's state of mind.

Spending some time in one's life, particularly at a younger age, looking within one's internal world and applying some meditation techniques will not hinder one's life in any negative way. It will not hinder one's ability to study now. It will actually help to focus better in one's studies. It will not hinder one's work. It will only help one to be able to manage one's work better. It will not hinder one's relationships. It will only help to foster better understanding and relationships. It will not hinder one's social skills. When one understands what the meditation technique involves and how it helps one's mind to be stronger, one can see how the benefits extend into one's daily life in every way by helping to develop one's skills.

I have also mentioned previously that, through my own experience, I can definitely vouch for the fact that the time between the ages of 15 and 30 is a period when the development of our brain and our intelligence is really heightened and at its peak. The teenage years from 15 onwards is a period when you can absorb and assess lots of information and use one's intelligence to investigate matters clearly. So it is a prime time to adopt study and learning skills and so forth. Likewise it is a prime time for developing one's internal qualities. I have found that this is definitely true from my own experience. When I look around I see that it is a fact that the younger generation have that advantage of a very sound intelligence. So it is a time to really embrace that. Understand that and utilise it for your benefit. That's what I keep urging the younger generation.

To emphasise further the importance of this juncture in one's life, this is a period of time when what one can open the gate for the rest of one's life. If one doesn't focus on anything and just lives in a daydream state and misses the opportunity to study and develop oneself it would be a great loss. It would be a great disadvantage for the rest of one's life. That is why I feel it is really important to take this on board.

What I am emphasising is not to squander the prime time in one's life but to use it for study. Study here, of course, would be academic study in schools and so forth. That would be your main focus. However as a way of promoting some inner happiness and peace in one's mind, I am also urging you to spend a few minutes a day to work on meditation practice and checking one's internal world and through this developing the positive qualities within oneself. That combination would be useful for the rest of your life.

If you were to think about the points that I mentioned earlier you might find them useful. You might find that it may be something worthwhile considering. Furthermore, as mentioned previously, meditation is a technique specifically to try to overcome the afflictions of our mind. Afflictions is a term that encompasses all the negative states of mind. If we didn't have these afflictions in our mind it would be fine and we wouldn't have to worry. But, as ordinary people, we are all affected regardless of our status and who we are. We all are affected by the afflictions at some time or other. We are affected by the shortcomings of the afflictions that disturb our mind and cause anxiety, fear and so forth.

As mentioned earlier, we are no strangers to ourselves. In other words, we know ourselves best. If we find, 'Yes, I do get affected by the afflictions. I'd like to try to appease my mind and have a calmer mind', then the meditation technique would be useful. Amongst the various different possible techniques, it has been found that the meditation technique definitely helps to settle the mind. Now, applying the meditation technique just for a few minutes periodically will not, of course, help to completely overcome the afflictions. It will not completely uproot the afflictions such as anger and so forth from one's mind but, at the very least, during the period of meditation the mind will settle down. Afflictions such as anger, strong attachment desire and so forth will not be manifest during the actual time of meditation and, to that extent, we are familiarising ourselves with a good state of mind and becoming accustomed to that.

Relating back to a point I made earlier, the meditation technique would be useful regardless of whether one follows a particular religion or not. Whether one is religiously minded or not it will definitely help because it is a technique to appease one's mind and have a calmer, peaceful state of mind. Meditation is not something completely restricted to religious people. If it were the case that by not accepting any religion one would not be affected by anger, well fine, you don't need the meditation technique, because you're not affected by anger. However, those who follow religion, particularly those who have recognised anger affecting their mind and want to overcome that, adopt particular practices as a way to address that. But even if you are not religiously minded, you may still get affected by anger and so forth and adopt the technique without a religious connotation. One still has the responsibility to have a calm and peaceful happy mind. If you want that, then that's why it would be useful.

To illustrate that point about one not have to be religiously minded, this is, of course, a Buddhist Institute but you need not have to feel that you have to consider yourself Buddhist in order for the meditation technique to work for you. Some may doubt or question whether the meditation technique would only help if one became a Buddhist. That is definitely not the case. The effect of the meditation technique is something that goes beyond any religious context, it doesn't depend on whether you are Buddhist or not.

The reason I emphasise this point, apart from it being a personal commitment, is that prior to coming to teach here in Australia our spiritual head, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, made it very clear to me and some others who were going to the west to teach, 'You should not be going with any intentions of wanting to increase the number of Buddhists and try to convert others to Buddhism. You should completely avoid any kind of thoughts like that. Go to the Western countries with the sole intention that if whatever you present from the Buddhist teachings and techniques can benefit others, you will gladly share it so that others can adopt that in their life to make it a happier, more peaceful life.' The Dalai Lama pointed his finger at us to ensure that we keep that in mind. We made that commitment. That is definitely my commitment. My only intention in sharing these techniques is that they may be useful in your life. If it helps you to gain a little bit more mental peace and well-being, then that serves its purpose. Of course, to present the techniques in this way means it will be less taxing for me as well (*Geshe-la laughs*).

If my intention was to try to make more Buddhists then I would have a big obligation. It would be a big task for me. I don't know if I could manage that (*laughter*).

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Indeed I find that the Dalai Lama has a far-sighted view about how to help others. I find his insights into how to help others very unique. I do not feel I am being biased just because the Dalai Lama is our spiritual teacher. This view is also based on what other religious leaders have confided in me. There have been a number of occasions when other religious leaders have personally told me, 'It is remarkable that the Dalai Lama promotes religious harmony and for all religions to come together and work together. He talks about the values of all religions and promotes inter-religious dialogue and understanding.' One religious leader said to me, 'You have a very unique leader, a very good spiritual leader. I really admire him.'

I was told this on an occasion when I went to a Christian church to a gathering of different religious heads to do a ceremony together. It was actually a Jewish Rabbi who told me that. I felt it was very significant that a Jewish Rabbi could offer praise and admiration for the Dalai Lama. That was a very comforting remark from a spiritual leader of another tradition.

To again summarise the main points in simple terms, I like to use simple terms to help people understand; we all want to be happy, we all cherish happiness and well-being. Within the various levels of happiness, the utmost happiness is our mental happiness. That is something that is within us and is more lasting. So, it is good to protect whatever mental happiness one has. The younger generation has a natural sense of joy and happiness, so try to protect that. If, for whatever reason it has declined, understand that there are ways to restore it. So it would be worthwhile to consider adopting some techniques to do that. Amongst the various techniques, meditation is a very useful, very simple technique that would help you to protect or restore mental happiness.

That's my message to you for no other reason than if I see one person being happy, that gives me joy too. If I see one person sad that makes me a little bit uncomfortable. I am sure you would all relate to those feelings as well. When you see a joyful person it seems to give you some joy. Right? You know you like to see people being happy. If there are sad people around, one starts feeling a little bit sad too. In simple terms again, try to be very mindful and careful when you have all these good conditions. Try to use these conditions when you have them. I am relating all of this in simple terms because having lived in this country for over 30 years I feel that I've got some understanding of how the psyche works here. Maybe it's my assumptions or maybe I just made it up (*laughter*), but when I look around I feel that I might have some basic understanding through my experience relating with others and so forth. I do feel that there are some ways of thinking or attitudes that cause one to destroy one's own happiness. That's what I find a pity. If one could only overcome that.

While I may feel that there is something like a knot in your minds that needs to be addressed, because of my lack of knowledge of the English language I am not really able to address it myself with whoever I meet. Even though I might want to share something, because of lack of language I cannot really say it directly myself. I could just make some physical gestures but that wouldn't really help (*Geshe-la laughs*).

Having mentioned how the meditation technique works and how it benefits us if we apply the technique and assuming that we have got some understanding and feel it is

worthwhile, we can now take some time to apply the meditation technique for a few minutes. Just to present the meditation technique again. It is the afflictions in our mind that cause us the troubles of turmoil and mental agony. These afflictions overtake us in various different ways. One way is with distractions. When there are many distractions some of the afflictions in our mind prompt us to follow these distractions and before we know it our mind is completely overpowered by those distractions and afflictions that then causes the onset of troubles in our mind.

The main point is that for as long as we allow our mind to become completely distracted then, to that extent, we will experience the ill effects of a disturbed mind. If we can acknowledge that for ourselves we need to then try to reverse that and not have our mind completely distracted and wandering off in every direction, but rather try to train it to be more focused on whatever object that we choose. For our meditation here the object that we choose to focus on is our breath. First of all we need to make the commitment that, 'For the next few minutes, I am not going to allow my mind to wander off following every thought that pops up in my head. I am not going to allow my mind to follow that but rather I am going to bring my attention inward and focus it upon the breath.'

In simple language, what we are attempting to do when we focus on an object, in this case our breath, is that we are attempting to bring about a single pointed focus on the object, giving it our full attention. When we bring our attention inward, if we didn't have something to focus on we would not be able to maintain our focus. The very function of our mind is to be aware of something. If there is nothing to be aware of internally then it naturally starts to wander off trying to find something to be occupied with. Here we use the breath to anchor our attention.

The way we place our attention on the breath is like trying to balance something on a fine point. If you want to balance something and it's a little bit too far to the right side it will lean there and fall off. If it's a little bit to the left then it will also fall off. If it's pointing too high then of course it would not remain there. Similarly if it's pointing too low. When you find the perfect balance then that object you put on something else will remain very firm and steady. It is similar with the meditation practice. When we focus on the breath we need to ensure that it is the right balance of keeping our entire attention on the breath itself so that it does not find any excuse to go off and lean in some other direction. Therefore as we breathe in and breathe out we imagine we see our breath coming in and going out and then place our full attention and focus on that for the next few minutes. (*Pause for meditation*)

That should be sufficient for now. With the remaining time does anyone have any questions?

*Question: My question is in relation to anger. Isn't in some circumstances anger useful because, to quote my own father, 'If you keep turning the other cheek, you will get a bruised cheek'. So isn't anger useful for protection of yourself and your family?*

I don't blame you for asking that question because when anger arises it has the very deceiving appearance that it acts as a protection. That is how it actually arises.

While anger may arise with the aspect of protecting oneself, in reality the immediate effect of anger is that one's mind is disturbed. If one pays attention to one's state of mind when one is angry one would be able to notice that. But does it actually serve to protect one from others? There are some

who also believe that without anger one could not overcome one's enemy. But, in reality, when one gets angry it's those who are close to oneself, one's immediate relations, family, siblings, children and so forth who feel the effect of that. They are the people who one starts to become annoyed with and who feel the brunt of one's anger rather than the real enemy who might be too fearsome to combat. That's one aspect of the situation.

While anger is not based on a rational state of mind the outcome of real anger may not be effective. In relation to thinking that anger might be useful in protecting oneself from an enemy and so forth, what anger does when it arises is that it physically fills one with a sense of energy, courage and so forth. It gives one a physical appearance that looks menacing and says, don't you dare approach me. It makes one physically more powerful and fearsome and that appearance may help to caution someone who wants to harm us. It is that physical appearance that protects us rather than the feeling inside of us. What we can take from that is that in order to protect ourselves there might be occasions where we do actually want to look a bit wrathful and show that aspect of, 'Hey don't mess with me'. But if inside you don't get angry and don't have an intention to harm anyone, but just to protect yourself then that outer appearance may be deemed to be necessary at certain times. Did that make sense?

*Questioner: Yes it does.*

I am talking a bit from my own experience here. Showing a little bit of a menacing appearance to appease others who might otherwise harm us is something that I have experience with myself.

In my earlier years I studied in India at the Sanskrit University in Varanasi. At that time I had a friend who was known to be a reincarnated lama. He was very fond of me and would go everywhere with me. We were very good friends. One time we went into town to a vendor who was selling books and unbeknownst to me the Indian might have said something to the Rinpoche and he got quite upset and hit him on his cheek.

So the Indians started to gather around and some were holding onto his watch trying to take his watch and they were grabbing him all over. I was the only other one there. It was known amongst the Indians that you don't mess around too much with the Tibetans because they carry knives with them (*Laughter*). That was a prevalent idea about Tibetans. In desperation, not knowing what to do in this situation and being clearly outnumbered by the Indians, I put my hand into my pocket in a menacing way as if I was going to pull out something. When the Indians noticed that, they immediately started to back away (*Laughter*). We returned home quickly after that.

This is just a personal account as one example. But many of you might also have an experience of this yourselves. Sometimes, in order to discipline children so that they don't cause themselves harm, you might have to show a little bit of a wrathful aspect. You might have to shout at them so that the children get a little bit afraid and it will prevent them from getting into harm's way. It is not anger. The parents are not angry with the children but they have to show that aspect to caution them so that they take heed.

Even where these gestures do follow a bit of a feeling of annoyance, deep inside the only concern is, of course, for the child and seeing they don't come in harm's way. Because of sheer frustration there might be occasions where parents

take measures out of annoyance but those external measures of wrathfulness are a way to protect their children. In that sense we would be able to justify that, even if there is a bit of annoyance, because it is in the best interests of the child. It is because deep inside parents have only genuine love and want to protect their child that they are exhibiting those gestures. In that case we would understand that it was useful.

Some mothers have related to me that sometimes, out of sheer frustration, they just start crying a bit. That then makes the children a little bit apprehensive and stops what they're are doing (*Laughter*). These are just finding different means to try to address the situation.

However, to return to whether anger is useful or not. The definition of anger in our tradition is a harmful intent. Because it is a harmful intent, there would be no way that anger itself could be a real benefit to others. Anger in its raw form cannot be of any use to others, because it is based on a harmful intent. Unlike anger there can be some ways and means for attachment to benefit the other. That is something we can see. Out of attachment you might give nice gifts and things to others, so there is some benefit it can bring to others.

Before we end the session for the evening, let us again spend a few moments in meditation. This time we can use the sound of a mantra being recited as our object of focus. So when we hear the recitation of Buddha Shakyamuni's name mantra, we try to apply our full attention and focus to that. Then, when the recitation subsides, we just focus on the residue, the blissful feeling we get. We can just spend a few moments on that.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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