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these kinds of positive states will automatically decrease your negative attitudes, so that your pessimistic, depressed and anxious states of mind will naturally subside.

If you practise the meditation technique earnestly, you will inevitably reach a point where you feel energised, calm and peaceful. Your new composure and clarity may even surprise and amaze you because its development is so subtle and gradual. In fact, you may not have realised that these levels of inner peace were possible. Of course I am not implying that I am a great meditator, but my own experiences with using this technique have been very valuable because my mind is definitely calmer since I first adopted the method.

So, clarity, composure and calmness of mind are some of the immediate benefits of meditating, but you may be wondering what happens after a meditation session. Is it possible to maintain the peace you feel while meditating during everyday life? If we have this query we can refer to the advice of the great Buddhist master Shantideva who taught in the *Bodhisattvacharyavata*

*O you who wish to guard your minds,  
I beseech you with folded hands:  
Always exert yourselves to guard  
Mindfulness and introspection*

Master Shantideva is advising those who wish to protect their minds from adversity to apply mindfulness and introspection in all their actions. "Mindfulness" specifically means to constantly remember the meditational inner object, which is virtuous because of its effect. If we consistently remember the inner object, we are applying mindfulness appropriately. "Introspection" refers to a mental function which vigilantly guards against the mind becoming distracted and brings it back to the focus of the inner object. Introspection checks whether the mind has become preoccupied with another object so its purpose is to guard the mind from being side-tracked from the virtuous object and to ensure the chosen focus is adhered to. Mindfulness and introspection are two states of mind which serve as aids to make sure we maintain positive states of mind. If you apply them correctly, they will definitely help protect your state of mind and guide you usefully in your everyday life.

Our problems can be overcome if we meditate, and safeguard our minds with mindfulness and introspection. We all face problems periodically and although we do not like them or wish for them, they are unavoidable. Meditation, and the mental aids of mindfulness and introspection, are therefore very valuable techniques to solve the problems we already have and to mitigate future ones arising.

Therefore, we need to understand that meditation does not only involve sitting quietly for a few minutes a day in order to focus on a particular object. Rather, the practice encompasses our entire moment-to-moment life because it involves applying mindfulness and introspection even when we are not formally meditating. The real significance of a meditation practice is that it assists you throughout the day to personally solve your problems. If you know this and experience it for yourself, then, when

someone comes up to you and says, "Hey, I've heard that you meditate. Does it help you to solve your problems?" You can confidently reply, "Yes! It really does!" [*Everyone laughs.*]

Your friends and colleagues may sincerely ask you about your meditation practice and want you to share what you have learned. If you are able to relate to them how meditating has served you as a means to gradually discern positive states of mind from negative ones so that you can promote advantageous outlooks that help you cope with your problems, you will be sharing something genuine and worthwhile. If you explain the meditation technique in this way, by using your personal experience, it will be readily accepted by others because your presentation will be logical, systematic and based on your personal observations.

Of course, this is assuming the person who asks you about meditation is intelligent. Intelligence in Buddhist teachings is broadly synonymous with analytical wisdom and refers to the ability to distinguish between what is right and wrong, positive and negative, or good and bad. Someone who has the desire to distinguish between various useful and useless states of mind would readily accept your explanation, but if you speak to someone who does not really care about consequences then your presentation may be inappropriate for that person. The main point is that when you share the benefits of your meditation practice with others, you need to emphasise why you meditate and what your experience has been. This is very valuable to others because the rationale of what you are doing and the proof in doing it is helpful to them. If you said to others that meditation is just sitting down and closing your eyes and give no other explanation, they might do just that and the most likely outcome would be that they become comfortable in the darkness of having their eyes closed and fall asleep. Some people have commented to me that they have meditated for years, but their minds have become dull and dark. This is the result of misunderstanding the meditation technique - sitting down and closing the eyes cannot bring about a positive result. It will only cause a dullness in your mind. Therefore, ensure that you apply the meditation technique accurately yourself and that you advise others to follow the instructions well so that everyone can gain from the practice.

We can now spend the next few minutes meditating. First we can readjust our postures so that we are physically relaxed, and we can direct our minds to be in a positive and clear state. The inner object we will focus on will be our individual breathing pattern. If that's not suitable for you, you can choose an alternative inner object. However, the main point is once we have chosen an inner object to focus on, we stick with it and bring our full attention to it. We do this by intentionally withdrawing from all other thoughts and objects we might be usually occupied with. We just let go of those concerns and don't follow those thoughts when they arise. Instead, we use our mindfulness to constantly bring our chosen inner object to our minds and use our introspection to keep us on point. So, for the next few minutes, bring your full attention to your chosen object and focus on nothing else. This is the meditation technique.

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[Pause for single-pointed meditation.]

There are a few minutes of our session left and I have noticed some new people have attended, so perhaps they might want to ask a question. If there are no questions, we can continue with the text we are studying from.

*Question:* To be a mindful Buddhist do you have to eliminate the emotion of anger? If that's the case, I can't do it, and I don't want to because I find anger helps me to make decisions, and to stand up for my rights and things I value. So, to be a mindful Buddhist do I have to eradicate my anger?

*Geshe-la:* Being a mindful Buddhist does not mean that your anger has been completely eradicated. [*Geshe-la says in English that he has anger.*] I have to admit that I get angry too! [*Geshe-la laughs.*]

What needs to be understood about anger is that it arises seemingly to aid and protect us. In relation to anger serving as a means to right a wrong, specifically in relation to wanting to overcome enemies or those that harm us, the great master Shantideva recommends the best way to do this is to overcome the anger we personally feel. He taught that overcoming your internal anger is the equivalent to subduing all your enemies. The alternative to this is to overcome your external enemies while fostering your internal anger. It not possible to overcome all your enemies, but it is possible to overcome your inner enemy of anger.

There may be many who feel that without anger they could not face or overcome an enemy, but how does your anger *really* harm or overcome an enemy? Of course anger might motivate you to inflict harm and exacerbate an already adverse situation, but your anger is only felt by you, so who is it really harming? If you do not consider this point and think anger is the measure you need to overcome the enemy, you will naturally see anger as a necessary attitude to have. However, if we imagined that we did not have any anger whatsoever, how would it be possible for us to have enemies? If we did not harbour any anger or hostility within ourselves we would not have any ill-will towards anyone and it would be impossible for us to see anyone else as an enemy.

Shantideva presents a poignant analogy to assist our understanding of this. He taught that if the world was filled with sharp thorns and pebbles but we needed to walk around, it would be easier to put leather on our feet than to attempt to cover the entire world in leather. Covering the world in leather is not possible, but covering your own feet is, which would be equivalent to covering the whole earth with leather. Similarly, overcoming your own hostility is the equivalent to vanquishing all your enemies. I believe a person without anger automatically has no external enemies and so has no external enemies to defeat.

We are fortunate enough to be in a place that does not entail using physical force to protect our personal safety. There are unfortunately exceptions to this, but on the whole, in Australia, we have conditions where physical force to defend ourselves is unnecessary. If you thought you needed anger to make decisions and to stand up for your rights, you could observe and analyse your

anger to see if that is really true. If you did this, you would probably see that it does not put you in a peaceful state.

Anger is an emotion which significantly disturbs the mind. It arises immediately and without much control, so making clear and balanced decisions is not really possible. In fact, more recently western scientists and clinical psychologists have examined and measured the perceptions of those that are angry against factual information that caused their anger to arise. These scientists and psychologists have concluded that when we are angry we are so skewed by the emotion that we falsely attribute ninety-five per cent of the problem as the fault of the person, when the reality is closer to five per cent. This means that the majority of our perception when we are angry is completely fabricated and false.

For ordinary people like us, who have not trained our minds to a great extent, anger arising is quite natural. We can use mindfulness and introspection to protect ourselves from intense moments of anger and prevent it from developing into hatred, which would be incredibly harmful. So, although uncontrollable anger does arise in us, if we notice it and prevent it from developing, we can make it less intense so that it causes minimal harm to ourselves and hopefully no harm to others.

Another great Indian master, Aryadeva, taught that anger and attachment are equally faulty and destructive to our minds, but seeing the faults of anger using our personal experience is easier to do because the faults of attachment are tricky to decipher. This is because attachment, or desire, has a tendency to bring people together, whereas anger has the tendency to separate and distance them. We also immediately feel uneasy, irritated and agitated when anger manifests in our minds, which is uncomfortable, thus easy to pinpoint as not being good for our minds. With attachment, however, there is this illusion of a pleasurable feeling so it is more difficult to recognise as a fault.

That was a good question. Thank you.

*Question:* Are there any techniques that can be used to overcome anger or attachment when it arises?

*Geshe-la:* First of all, when attachment arises, the mind perceives the object as being very appealing and attractive. Since the mind of attachment taints our perception to see the object as being very attractive, an opposing state of mind is necessary to overcome the perception. The meditation to overcome strong attachment to an object is to focus on the natural defects of that object. Focusing on the defects of the object weakens the mind's perception that the object is completely appealing and has no faults. For example, if you were attached to your body and saw it as being attractive and beautiful, you could investigate it from the tip of your toes to the top of your head and look beyond the superficial level of your skin to analyse what is inside. When this is done, and you think about all the substances your body contains, it becomes much less appealing and attractive. This meditation helps reduce and prevents attachment to the body, and can be applied to other people's bodies to overcome strong desire.

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I have suggested meditating on your own body first because a lady commented to me once that using this technique on someone you are very attached to is very difficult to do. She saw that the meditation did help her to overcome attachment to another person, but she said it was a very challenging analysis for her. I think what she was really relating to me was that she did not want to see the other person as being defective in any way, so doing this meditation affected her attachment and she did not want that! [*Everyone laughs.*]

Of course, if you are overly attached to another person but are not working on overcoming that attachment from the depths of your heart, these types of meditation practices will not have much effect on your mind. Instead you will focus on the person's body having some defects and unattractive aspects, but your attachment will not diminish because you keep the attachment deep inside and let your attachment dismiss all faults.

An object of anger is the complete opposite to an object of attachment because with anger, you exaggerate the faults and unappealing features of the object. The exaggeration can develop into a deep aversion. Since this is the case, the meditation technique to overcome anger is to focus on the object's natural beauties and qualities. This meditation replaces the attitude of the object being completely riddled with faults, so that the projected unattractive qualities start to decline and the qualities of the object are seen. This helps to reduce your anger.

The Buddha taught that the best method to counteract anger is to develop your compassion and love. If you feel compassion and love for another person, your anger will be overcome. Buddha also taught monks and nuns to give meals, food and clothes to those who are short-tempered and prone to anger. This lessens the ordained person's attachment to objects and appeases the angry person's mind too. Buddha further advised the ordained to have less desire and be content with what they already have because monks and nuns have renounced worldly pleasures and live simply so cannot harbour attachment to various objects. Although Buddha advised the ordained community to give food and clothes to an angry person, this is good advice for the lay community to adopt as well. It serves as a temporary measure to appease someone who is easily irritated.

I have previously advised couples to take their time when one of them arrives home after a long and tiring day at work, because the person arriving home might have had a troubling day and be a bit agitated. If the partner pester the person who has arrived home with questions and is very talkative, it might be like adding fuel to the fire and the outcome might not be very good because the other may become more agitated. If instead the partner understands the other's state of mind and says, "Relax. Take a shower. I'll make us some tea and then a nice meal," the outcome would be better because it would help to appease the person's mind.

[*Geshe-la says in English to not ask why your partner is irritated, but give the person a chance to relax. If you make your partner feel comfortable and remember they have had a long day, you are helping them by not insisting they answer your questions and discuss issues that are important to you.*]

Taking these practical measures is worthwhile with a person you live with or care for. You could consider the situation as being an opportunity for you to show your understanding, love and genuine compassion towards the other, and to make them feel comfortable so that they can overcome their disturbed state of mind. That would be an appropriate way to apply your genuine concern for the person. We know from our own experience that someone who is angry or irritated is not in a happy state of mind, so disregard the reason why they are troubled until they are in a better state and willing to share their story in a comfortable atmosphere. This is a practical and harmonious way to deal with this kind of situation.

Thank you for the questions - they were very good. I do not know if I have answered them to your content. However, before we end the session for the evening let us again take the opportunity to spend a few minutes in meditation. This time we can use the sound of the mantra to be recited, which is Buddha Shakyamuni's name mantra. As we hear the mantra, we can place our full attention and focus on its sound until the recitation subsides. When it does subside, we can maintain our focus on the nice sensation or feeling that we get from our focus. That will suffice as our meditation.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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