
benefit for you, so I encourage the younger generation to pay heed to these instructions.

3) The best knowledge is the wish to benefit others

The best quality we can develop is the wish to benefit others. In terms of the knowledge or qualities we can gain, when we generate the genuine wish to benefit others, then when the opportunity arises, we will naturally be inclined to help and benefit others. That is the best quality we could ever develop.

As we train the mind to generate the wish to benefit others, what that means in practicality is that we are taking the initiative so that others experience happiness, and helping to remove any kind of unwanted misery and suffering from others. The wish to benefit others encompasses those two states – establishing happiness for others and removing suffering from others. When we take that active role of helping to establish happiness for others, doing whatever we can to make others happy, and doing whatever we can to alleviate the suffering of others, then that is something which anyone would appreciate. When we relate it to ourselves, we can immediately acknowledge that if someone is taking the initiative to make us happy and helping us to alleviate our suffering, we naturally respond positively to that, and we definitely appreciate that.

Likewise, any other human being with common sense will definitely appreciate that as well. Another point I emphasise regularly, is that the wish to benefit others is dependent on our own attitude, and is not dependent on how others treat us or see us. When we train our mind to generate the genuine wish to benefit others, it is an initiative that we take from our own side, so that whenever that opportunity arises, we put that into practise. If we were to be dependent on how others regard us or treat us, we might not have the strong initiative to help others, depending on the situation. If we take the initiative of wishing to benefit others, regardless of how they react, we will be the sole beneficiary of having that positive state of mind. This is something we need to keep in mind.

When we take the initiative to develop the wish to benefit others, and acquaint our mind with that periodically, it will prevent us from focusing just on ourselves. Otherwise, when we are not thinking about the welfare of others, that is when we tend to be obsessed with our own selfish needs and welfare. When we focus solely on our own personal wellbeing, then that becomes a cause of much inner turmoil. This is another point we need to relate to as a benefit of thinking about the welfare of others. Having mentioned that the wish to benefit others encompasses the initiative to establish happiness and wellbeing for others, and removing unwanted sufferings from others, then that is what love and compassion entails. Love is the state of mind that genuinely wishes others to be happy, whereas compassion is the wish for others to be free from suffering – therefore we would be actively practicing love and compassion when we generate those attitudes.

Love and compassion contribute to genuine wellbeing for ourselves and our relations with others. As I mention regularly, in a relationship, such as two people

committed to each other and living together, when genuine love and compassion is mutually practised in that relationship, then it becomes a harmonious and good relationship. This becomes the main factor to sustain the relationship – a genuine relationship does not depend on status, knowledge, skills or even wealth. Even when there are a lot of external factors intact, we can see that many relationships don't work out well, and there is a lot of conflict. What would be missing then is the genuine love and compassion for each other. Therefore if people can secure genuine love and compassion, then regardless of the other external conditions, there would be natural mutual support and genuine care for each other – it is in this way that the relationship will sustain. These are really important points. The practise of love and compassion needs to start in the immediate surroundings – someone you normally associate with, live with, or have a committed relationship with – and from that it can extend further.

What I am attempting to do here really is to point out your inner qualities – namely love and compassion. You all have that basis in your relationships – there is definitely a certain amount of love and compassion, which prompts you to have a meaningful relationship with others. Sometimes we need to be reminded about our inner qualities; likewise with faults. When we acknowledge and recognise that internally, that is when our own wisdom has developed to the point of being able to clearly identify and recognise our inner qualities (which would need to be further developed) and certain faults (that we need to work at minimising and begin to discard). The wisdom of discernment, or analytical wisdom, is something which becomes our ultimate aid and companion to help us make decisions about our life. This is why I am pointing this out to you now, but ultimately it is up to you to take this on board and utilise it within your own mind.

When this understanding is borne from our own insight, then that is what will establish the inner conviction. At that point, even when others try to disagree with you and lead you astray, it will not affect you, because you would know for yourself – you will have the conviction about the need to adopt certain qualities and discard certain faults. Regardless of what others say, you will have a clear understanding of what to do. That is when someone becomes what we normally call a little bit stubborn, but in a good way.

We may notice that certain skilled scientists or psychologists are very firm and adamant in their own beliefs – that is because they have analysed and really worked at understanding what they have achieved.

When something is achieved through reasoning and logic, that becomes a strong inner conviction, and people become adamant in keeping and maintaining the achievements they have obtained, which is based on lots of investigation. In relation to scientific findings, we can see that it is not something which has come about randomly or easily, but those conclusions have been reached through lots of investigation – such as using instruments to check miniscule atoms, and different methods and analysis. When they reach a certain

understanding and conclusion, that becomes a very sound and good conclusion. The main point is that we need to discern through logic and reasoning, and when we develop the understanding or achieve something significant, then it will be with strong conviction.

If we adopt this training, and it becomes a regular practise, then whenever someone says something, we will have a good basis to discern whether what they are saying is based on some truth or falsity and whether it is beneficial or not. That is something which we will be able to detect, otherwise it might be hard to know clearly.

4) The best discipline is to subdue the mind

This is another very significant point – the discipline of being able to sit rigidly and maintain a composed physical posture for a long time is not really a big achievement, and in itself is not the real discipline, but the most significant discipline is being able to subdue the mind. Subduing the mind is not allowing the mind to be influenced by negativities called the delusions. The best way to subdue the mind is through having clear discernment as to which negativities or afflictions have to be overcome and subdued, and what are the positive states of mind which need to be increased and further developed. The best method to do that is through the practise of meditation.

To emphasise this point again, we can quote the Buddha, who said that **a subdued mind is a happy mind**. As the Buddha himself very succinctly mentioned, if we were to consider what constitutes a happy mind, it is really a subdued mind. A subdued mind here reflects upon a mind which is appeased from disturbing states of mind, such as intense anger or attachment. These strong negativities cause turmoil in the mind, and therefore it would not be a happy state of mind. Whereas, when the mind is appeased and not under the influence of anger and attachment, then the mind becomes genuinely calm, and therefore in a happy state.

The opposite of a subdued mind is a mind which is completely influenced by what is called the disturbing conceptions or the discursive conceptual states of mind. These superstitious, or disturbing conceptions, are what cause the turmoil in our mind, so the mind wanders off in every direction, becoming completely distracted. Therefore the practise of meditation is specifically a technique training our mind not to be swayed or influenced by the disturbing conceptions.

To adopt the practice of meditation, what we need to do first of all, within that comfortable relaxed physical posture, is to ensure that our mind is in a clear state. For the purpose of meditation, we need to apply the discipline and make the commitment that for the next few minutes 'I will not allow my mind to be influenced by the disturbing conceptions'. This means that we need to intentionally withdraw from whatever memories or thoughts occur in the mind, and not allow the mind to be carried away with that. Then we bring our mind and focus within, and place it on the natural rhythm of our breath, being fully aware of each breath coming in and going out. So with a hundred percent focus on the breath itself, we will adopt the meditation technique for the next few minutes.

[Pause for meditation]

That is sufficient for now. The points that I related earlier might be significant for you to consider. With the limited time we have left, there might be time for some questions.

Student: You talk a lot about love and compassion. My mother, who lives overseas, loves me very much, but she is very abusive and controlling. My husband has been very patient, but last time she visited, he was fed up with how she treated me. He said that if she behaves that way next time, it will be either him or her in the house!
[Laughter]

Geshe-la: First of all, you are not alone in that situation, it seems there that there are many instances like that.

[Geshe-la says in English: "Too much contact. If you live in your home, it is cheaper, but too much contact."]

The fact and reality is that maybe living together in that situation would be difficult.

If we try to understand why that sort of behaviour is coming from the mother, my feeling is that, first of all, as a parent, it seems that their child is always regarded as a child, even when they have grown up to become an adult. In the parent's mind, it seems that they are still quite young and therefore they feel that they should have control over their children. They can't hold themselves back, it naturally seems to come out. Particularly in the East, it seems to be a little more acceptable in some ways, or maybe more manageable. In the West, it seems that the parents also have the appearance of having to be the boss, and having the right to say what is right or wrong. When that mentality is prevalent, it is difficult for children or others to accept that.

Although they might not see it that way, their attitude might be: 'I have a responsibility for my child'. It may be more out of a sense of concern for the child, but when it is communicated, it comes across as a controlling issue, in some cases.

If that were the case, that the controlling issue is actually stemming from a sense of concern and responsibility, and we can understand it in that way, then we may be able to accept it more readily. Even though they may not be aware that it is hard for us, and it comes across as a controlling issue, nevertheless we must think 'my mother does have concern for me, and thinks about my wellbeing and welfare'. So if you are able to think in that way, then it might be a little more acceptable, knowing that she does love you, and it can help you not to get angry or upset with your mother.

Another way to look at it, is that it seems that many things are done just because it is a custom or traditional, in other words, be very acquainted with that way of doing things.

Maybe you can try to negotiate with your husband that for two months *[laughter]*, or whatever time that your mother is here, you can be extra patient and just accept that my mum just can't help herself. It is her way of showing concern for me, but maybe we just have to be a little more tolerant about that.

Here in the West, it is commonly accepted that when you visit your parents, you stay for a week; that seems to be a good solution. *[laughter]*

[Geshe-la says in English: "Four or five days enough. Love, more love. Longer alright - then normal."]

Maybe you can relate to your husband that this seems quite prevalent everywhere, it is not just with us.

Student: I will tell my mother two weeks at the most, not two months!

Geshe-la: Of course, from your mum's side, she wants to come to see you, out of concern for you.

[Geshe-la says in English: "Mother is coming. Mother misses you. All the time, Mother worries, all the time."]

There is an acquaintance of mine, in a Vietnamese family, whose mother apparently is a traditional sort of mother, so is quite a strong character.

Apparently there is a tradition in Vietnam, when a child is born, that you shouldn't bath them for two months. So the mother was telling her daughter, you shouldn't wash your child for two months. *[Geshe-la says in English: "No shower"]*

They came to see me, and I took the initiative to explain to the mother that what you relate to your children is the tradition which comes from Vietnam. You were born and raised in Vietnam, so naturally you are acquainted with that tradition. However your children were born here.

[Geshe-la says in English: "Your culture is the Vietnamese culture, you were born there. Your children were born here, and grew up here, with Australian education. Children help, children are very happy. Mother likes that all help. She said Mother worries all the time."]

So the main thing is that, regardless of your mother's own way of thinking, it is important to have a loving attitude towards her and show your love to her. Relate to your husband as well as to why your mother would be doing that – she can't help it, because of her tradition and upbringing, she has that sort of mentality, then it might be at least more understandable.

What you also need to take into consideration is, generally when people age, there is a dramatic change in their way of thinking, that takes place. When your parents reach that age, you should not relate to them in the same way as when they were younger, because their way of thinking has changed a lot. While we might have maintained a similar way of thinking, they have changed a lot.

These are ways of how to look at it, and how to think about the situation. I don't see it as a huge problem in your life.

You could also maybe take the initiative to visit her sometime, instead of her coming to see you. You can say 'Mum, this time I will visit you' but of course since you have work and so forth, you can take care not to stay too long! *[Laughter]*

So your mother will appreciate that you have gone to visit her, and if you explain that you have to go back soon because of your job, she will also accept that, because she

would know that a job is really important here in the West – that is how you sustain yourself.

[Geshe-la says in English: "You will be happy, if you go. Father and mother are important today."]

There seem to be different stages of what parents wish for their children: the first is getting a good education and knowledge, then based on that, getting a good secure job, then when that is all in place, the parents start to think 'It will be nice to have grandchildren'. *[Geshe-la laughs]*

[Geshe-la says in English: "Last week I talked about the importance of family. When father and mother are old, you have to help. You know, the old story from the past is gone. Good story, bad story all gone. Good story can never come here, bad story never come here. You don't think, just look – father and mother are old and sick. That's my father, that's my mother. Who will help? I will help. If you think that way, you will feel much better."]

I related that in our session last week, so these are points to reconsider. I am sure your husband would acknowledge the fact that it is important to be good and kind to our parents.

Before we conclude our session for this evening, let us again take the opportunity to spend a few minutes in meditation, this time focusing on the sound of the mantra to be recited, which is Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra. Try to focus on that sound, and when the recitation subsides, focus on the pleasant residual feeling.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

*Transcribed by Kim Foon Looi
Edit 1 by Ingrid Leibbrandt
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
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