
and then expect that the money will suddenly appear out of nowhere. Of course your kind parents may help you out to a certain extent, but after a while they will expect you to work for your own money". Gaining money and wealth depends on certain conducive conditions that you need to acquire, and you acquire those conditions through your educational skills and so forth.

[Geshe-la says in English that if you want a job, you need education. You need money, but no one gives money for nothing. Where do you get money? From a job? How do you get job? By education. You want an independent life, you need money, you need a job, not just any job but a good job, so you need good education. You might think, 'I don't need money, I don't care about that' or 'I am not able to have a job'. But you have good health in body and mind. You can get a job and earn money.]

We all have the same potential, and that is something which we should reflect upon. The Sanskrit term for a person is *puruka*, which has literal connotation of one who has ability or potential. There is great meaning in that.

I encourage the younger generation, who have their life ahead of them, to really take initiative to acquire a good education and skills now, when they have the full ability and potential to acquire those things. As mentioned previously, we all have potential and ability, and we all have the same right to acquire anything that a human being can achieve, by virtue of the sheer fact that we are human ourselves.

Apparently, the system in a Western country is such that anyone who is capable of working should get a job. However I have heard that there might be over a hundred people applying for the same job. The employers will only choose someone who has the ability and skills to do that job. So, where does that skill come from? It comes from education. That is why I encourage the younger ones to really make an effort, and put the time into educating themselves. Some who have heard me give this advice in the past have really appreciated that advice. They have taken the initiative, and then found that it has benefited them. By taking the initiative to get a good education and secure a good livelihood for yourselves, your life will only get better and better and not worse!

It makes me happy when I see youngsters who are studying well, who are getting a good education, who are generous and kind, and who work well. Even though I may not know them, or have any acquaintance with them, it makes me happy when I see the younger generation taking initiative with their education and so forth. Even though it may seem out of place for me to relate all this to you, it is because of the genuine concern that I have for all you youngsters here. I know a few youngsters here who are fond of me, and see me as a friend, so this advice is my present to you.

As I have regularly shared with you in the past, one's prime time is between the ages of fifteen and thirty. Those are the years where one's intelligence is at its sharpest. So that is the time to use that intelligence to really acquire knowledge. Therefore I urge people of that

age to really take initiative, and not waste time. Seize this opportunity that you have now. Take a keen interest in your study and get a good education, because when that time has passed it will be much more difficult. That would be a real waste of your precious time and opportunity. That is why I am encouraging you like this now.

Coming back to the main point, a happy and positive state of mind is paramount for our wellbeing. Therefore we need to think about how to acquire the conditions that will promote a happy and positive state of mind. The optimum means to protect whatever positive state of mind we may have acquired, and for it not to decrease, is the practice of meditation. By adopting the meditation technique, we are adopting the conducive conditions for our mental wellbeing, at the same time as being trained in how to overcome the opposing conditions for our wellbeing. The more we acquaint ourselves with the opposing negative conditions for happy states of mind, the more likely it is that when negative or opposing conditions arise, we will be able to immediately recognise them, and thus overcome them. The point is that meditation is really important to sustain our wellbeing.

The meditation technique that we use here is where we choose an appropriate object to focus on, such as our breath, and then we apply our full attention and focus on that. We need to intentionally withdraw our focus on all other distracting external objects. The normal interaction between our mind and external objects is what causes the mind to become distracted, and preoccupied with so many different kinds of thoughts and ideas and so forth.

To allow our mind to come into a natural, tranquil and calm state, we need to temporally sever that relationship between our mind and external objects. The way to do that is by choosing an internal object such as our breath, and placing our full attention and focus just on that. Due to that separation from external objects, the mind will then experience a natural calmness and tranquillity. This is the how we need to understand the technique works.

Now we will place our full attention and focus on the breath for the next few minutes, and engage in the meditation technique. *(Pause for meditation)*

That will be sufficient for now. As you will have found, the meditation technique is not too difficult. In fact it is actually quite a simple technique. The main thing we need to achieve is a focused mind. We need to understand that following our hyperactive state of mind, with its random, discursive thoughts and distractions, is the cause of the distress that we feel.

So mental distress and a hyperactive mind are inter-related. When we adopt the meditation technique we are intentionally withdrawing from all sorts of random thoughts and objects, and bringing our focus and concentration inward. Then, because we are released from that hyperactive state of mind, the mind naturally becomes calmer and more settled, and then we experience a happy state of mind. That experience of happiness, no matter how short, is the basis for improving our state of mind, and then the period of

happiness can slowly be increased. So that experience of a happy mind while in meditation is really significant.

Some people have confided in me that when they meditate, they are happy, and that when they don't engage in meditation, they are not happy. What they are implying is that when they don't apply the meditation technique, that very hyperactive state of mind returns, causing distress and unhappiness.

If you have any questions in the remaining time, I can address them.

Geshe-la: In relation to a question asked last week, I have looked up the three suchnesses that are mentioned in the last verse of the *Twenty-one Tara Praises*.

It refers to Tara who is endowed with three suchnesses which are the ultimate purified body, speech and mind. This is represented with the three syllables OM AH HUM.

- OM on the crown of Tara, signifies the completely purified enlightened body, which is the suchness of the body;
- AH at the throat represents the completely purified enlightened speech, which is the suchness of the speech; and
- HUM at the heart represents the completely purified enlightened mind, which is the suchness of the mind.

Thus a practitioner who relies on Tara to remove obstacles and interferences, practises by visualising OM, AH and HUM at the crown, throat and heart respectively, and that visualisation helps them to purify all interferences, obstacles and so forth. So the three suchnesses relates to visualising the three syllabus, OM AH HUM, meditating on that which is endowed with three suchnesses, and then engaging in the activities of purifying and removing obstacles and so forth.

Question: I was wondering how important it is to distance oneself from external objects, such as another person with whom one has a relationship?

Geshe-la: It depends on the nature of the external objects. There are certain external objects that we depend upon. People such as parents and so forth, are indispensable, and we have to relate to them for the rest of our lives. With other people, it depends on both parties. You have to consider if you are the only one making the effort to maintain that relationship.

In fact relationships very much depend on mutual trust and concern for each other. When you start a relationship with another person, you need to reaffirm to yourself at the very outset that, 'If the relationship goes well then that's fine, but if it does not, and we separate then I will not allow the situation to cause me mental agony and suffering'. This will ensure that in the event of separation you will not suffer to a great extent.

As I have regularly mentioned in the past, while the initial motivating force behind a relationship starts with attachment, over time one can turn that attachment into real love and compassion. When that compassion and love for each other has been nurtured and increased, the relationship will be a really meaningful one. That is the way to approach relationships.

We have all seen couples who have been married for sixty or seventy years, and who are really caring and nurturing of each other. You can see that there is a very good relationship there. The relationship would have started out of attachment, but over the years, a genuine care for each other, based on love and compassion, has developed. Even in their nineties, they are still able to look after each other, and are fond of being in each other's company. We can really see the meaningful relationship that they have created.

So the main point is not to lose that sense of kindness and concern for the other. But that kindness and concern has to be a mutual experience, and that is the point that needs to be carefully considered. Does that help?

As I have also regularly shared in the past, in your teenage years it is naturally accepted you will have a girlfriend or boyfriend. However, as I have advised those youngsters with whom I have had a connection, don't be completely obsessed about that. Having a relationship is fine, but it is when one invests all one's energy and time in that relationship, and then the relationship doesn't work out, that one can be overwhelmed with sadness and agony. That will then definitely serve as a distraction from the main purpose in life, which is one's education and so forth. That would be a great loss. So be really conscious that while having a good relationship with others is fine, be mindful and cautious about not investing all one's time and energy in that. Rather, think about the greater purpose in life in the long run.

When a relationship goes sour, the youngster may be really confused and lost, and lose all enthusiasm and drive to study and so forth. That is the time, I tell the parents, when your children need your help. I tell the parents not to dismiss the issue, but to really support their child and care for them, because that is when they are really suffering, and need real guidance.

[Geshe-la says in English that they can't decide what to do, they are living at home and not happy. The parents don't like their girlfriend or boyfriend. They have got no money, they are very upset and can't study, and they can't get a job. They can even end up homeless.]

They are at a crucial age, and experiencing a loss is very hard for them. They are unable to decide anything for themselves, they have no initiative, and that is when they really need support. As I said earlier, they are at an age where it is natural to have a girlfriend or boyfriend. But parents sometimes don't support that. If their daughter brings back a boyfriend, and they don't like him, and don't really acknowledge him, and don't want him to come back, then that would hurt their daughter. It would be showing a real lack of support for their child.

Instead, as I have said in the past, it is good to invite the girlfriend or boyfriend into the home. It's also an opportunity to check them out to see whether they are suitable. It would be unfair to think that your son or daughter shouldn't have a girlfriend or boyfriend. The father wants friends, the mother wants friends so why wouldn't their children also need to have a companion and friends as well.

I have heard that the child may leave home if they feel that their parents don't really accept them. But they don't have the means to support themselves yet. Then it is very likely that the youngsters will become homeless. So as I have often mentioned, when a youngster is in a troubled state of mind, rather than being too inquisitive, or condemning them for not studying, or not working and so forth, just let them be. Make them feel relaxed, give them moral support, and don't stress them too much by telling them again and again what they should, and shouldn't do. That will just cause them even more agony and misery. So temporarily just let them relax, and that will help them to pick themselves up.

If a child is very easily irritated and angry, what can parents do? I advise buying some new clothes for them, giving them nice food, taking them out, and making them feel settled. That will really help them. This in fact is what the Buddha advised his disciples. When someone is really upset and angry give them good food and clothing, and that will appease them. Of course you can't provide too much for someone who is attached to those things, because that would just increase their greed.

We have touched on many different topics today. I treat you as friends and family. I don't hold anything back, but share whatever is on my mind, whatever I feel might be helpful, useful, or practical. Sometimes it may appear that it is not really relevant. But I am not trying to be pious thinking, 'Oh, everything is fine with me' while I ignore your concerns. My intention is that you receive some benefit from bringing up your concerns and sharing them. That is what I hope.

Regardless of what I have shared, you have been very attentive this evening, so thank you very much. Of course the advice tonight focused mostly on the younger generation. I feel that they are like a sprout. When you nourish a planted fruit seed, water it well and so forth, it will turn into a lovely fruit tree. Later it produces a lot of fruit, which can help many others as well. So youngsters are like a sprouting shoot—they need to be nourished and cared for so that they grow like a healthy plant. That is why I take the initiative to advise them.

Before we conclude this session for the evening, let us again spend a few minutes in meditation. This time we use the sound of the Buddha Shakyamuni mantra as our object. While it is being recited, we keep our attention focussed on the sound, distancing ourselves from all other preoccupations. Then, when the recitation subsides just hold your focus on that residue of sound, and the peaceful feeling within for a few minutes. That will suffice for our meditation.

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TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA