

Venerable Geshe Doga



**... some words which
may be useful for your life**

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Translated by

Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

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This book is dedicated to
The long life of Venerable Geshe Doga,
our spiritual guide and friend, please continue to teach
for the benefit of everyone.

and to

The long life of Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe,
Venerable Geshe Doga's excellent translator, please
continue to bring the Buddhadharma to life.

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Introduction

This book is a collection of teachings from 2009 to 2016 kindly given in Warrnambool by Venerable Geshe Doga and translated by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe.

Mostly the teachings have been transcribed from recordings and lightly edited. The transcribing and editing team are listed at the end of this book in the Acknowledgements. The teachings from 2009, 2010 and 2012 are from the notes of Damien Busby, a long time student of Geshe Doga. Recordings were not available for these years.

The welcome from the 2011 teachings is included as an introduction.

The Warrnambool Buddhist Group is delighted to welcome everyone. Venerable Geshe Doga, Venerable Michael and Geshe Doga's students; thank you for making the journey down to our beautiful but chilly town. We are very pleased to have you here. Travelling and making epic journeys has very much been part of Geshe Doga's life. He was born in 1935, in north eastern Tibet in a small village called Khamze. As a young child he was always wanting to visit the local monastery. At the age of seven, he became a monk at that monastery and continued to study there for ten years. Then at seventeen, he made his first great journey to Lhasa, where he studied at Sera Monastery, one of the great monasteries in Tibet.

In 1959 Geshe Doga fled Tibet and with a large group of monks walked to India. That was one of the most dangerous journeys. The group was shot at by the Chinese army and survived appalling conditions. Geshe Doga spent eight years in the Buxa Refugee Camp in India and while he was there, he finished his studies for his Geshe Degree.

At that time, he was selected to study Sanskrit at Varanasi University, where he translated Sanskrit Buddhist texts for the Indian people. He spent nine years at this university and received an Acharya degree. The following year Geshe Doga went to Sera Monastery, which had been re-established in Southern India, and sat for his Geshe Degree. Geshe Doga was awarded the highest Buddhist Degree, the Lharampa Geshe Degree. At that point Geshe Doga decided that he would teach and he was invited to teach at Kopan Monastery.

Kopan Monastery was set up in Nepal by Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa, whose photographs you can see on our altar. Geshe Doga taught the young monks at Kopan Monastery for three years, and no doubt came across a few of us westerners while he was there.

After that time, Lama Yeshe invited Geshe Doga to come and teach in Australia. So in January 1983 Geshe Doga arrived in Australia. He was happy to come to Australia, he thought that it would be a beautiful country and that he could teach things to us that would benefit our minds. Geshe Doga taught at the Atisha Buddhist Centre in Bendigo for a brief time and in 1984 he became the resident teacher at Tara Institute in Melbourne and is still teaching there. So for 28 years Geshe Doga has been teaching us with the intent to benefit our minds.

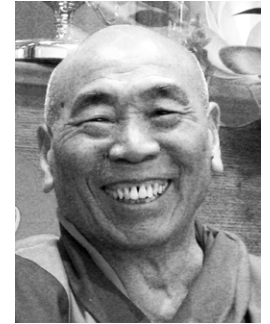
If we can have an open mind, listen with awareness, be honest about ourselves and where we are presently in our lives then we have the potential to receive great benefit from this teaching.



Venerable Geshe Doga teaching in Warrnambool

Finding out how happiness and sorrow depend on the mind

Day 1, 2009



One point to make, when details of any religion are presented and you adopt parts of the religion's techniques, you do not need to feel obliged to take on the religion.

When I came to the West, His Holiness the Dalai Lama advised me not to go with the intention of converting people to Buddhism. What I am implying is that if finding meditation useful then you can join in with the group here and do meditation, but not necessarily feel you have to be Buddhist to join.

The significance of engaging in meditation is to have a more subdued mind, a calmer and focused mind. If we don't have a calm mind, that is because our mind is very distracted and this is a result of the mind not being subdued. These distractions cause the mind to feel weary and even depressed. We appear to have formed a habit of allowing our mind to run anywhere it wants, thus we don't have our minds focused and centred. Initially we can start with a target of fifty percent of the time to not let our minds be completely distracted.

When we pay attention to our state of mind, we see our minds are easily influenced by things around us and occupied with so many distractions. When we investigate internally, it becomes evident that something appears to be lacking within us and we are not content within ourselves.

We may wonder what is wrong with having a distracted mind? When we leave the mind in a distracted, day-dreamy state we come up with all sorts of unrealistic ideas and plans. If these were achievable then we could say it is worthwhile, but these ideas are usually unrealistic, and result in us feeling down and uncomfortable so they are not worthwhile. As a result of our mind being distracted not only is our mind in an unclear and unstable state but this also affects our health, our body feels heavy and health complications can arise.

How can meditation help? The meditation technique is to intentionally withdraw our mind from distraction and focus entirely on the chosen object, then, as our mind gets released from distraction we experience a joyful and peaceful feeling in our mind. Having applied the technique of even a brief meditation, we notice it is possible to bring joy and happiness into our minds. We can all experience this, feeling a sense of joy and calmness in our minds serves the purpose of being human beings. But if distraction dominates our minds and we get into a depressed state, we may wonder 'what's the point of being a human being'?

Another important point is that having been introduced to meditation, if we wish to get a firm and stable result we need to practise on a regular basis. If we don't do this, we will lose the joy and happiness we initially obtained. A short session every day focusing on the meditation object will lead us to feeling joy and happiness more naturally. Begin by sitting in a relaxed, upright and comfortable posture and generate a positive attitude. Reminding ourselves of the real purpose of meditating we make a commitment to withdraw from distractions and begin meditating by focusing on our breath, keeping our mind on the breath.

Some people may be familiar with Buddhist techniques and know that there are other objects to focus on. However, the texts particularly recommend we focus on the breath to settle down the mind when it is distracted with many objects.

When we consider what we are striving for and working towards, whatever goals we have, they all lead up to the goal of being happy and wishing to not have any suffering.

We are all the same in seeking this goal of wishing to achieve happiness, it is a goal of everyone whether rich or poor. Whether we have an abundance of wealth or nothing, whatever culture we may belong to, and whether we have a religion or not or what type of religion we may follow, we are all the same in wishing to experience happiness.

Understanding this brings a deeper understanding of oneself and others. The deeper the understanding we can get from this, all wishing happiness and wanting to be free of every type of pain and suffering, then the more we can relate to others based on our shared common goal. When we recognise everyone is the same in this regard then a real sense of nurturing, care and compassion can come. With that understanding we can begin to really respect others and be concerned for and understand their needs as well. This is not an obscure point but a basic human experience, we all have the sense of clinging to our own interest; we all have the sense of 'I' and 'me'.

In relation to the grasping to a self-identity, grasping to what 'I' wish for and don't wish for, this grasping to our own self-interest leads to the minds of attachment and aversion. We generate attachment towards the things we want and anger towards those we dislike, both these states of mind stem from a strong grasping to 'I' and 'me'. When we consider how these two states of mind function in our lives we see with attachment we get close to some people making them exclusive as 'my' friends and relatives. Then with anger there are others that we call 'enemies' and to

whom we want to distance ourselves from. Due to these states of mind we generate tension and turmoil in our minds.

We can notice, in terms of external conditions, we are not much different to others, but in terms of our experience we do have different experiences that affect our minds. This relates to the earlier point that if our mind is unsubdued then it is in turmoil. A troubled mind is affected by the delusions of attachment and anger. This is what an unsubdued mind means.

The main point to emphasise is if we look into our life, what we are striving for whether we consider ourselves religious or not, or believe in an afterlife or not, what we are striving for is physical and mental well-being. Whatever we want and whatever we do, work, associations et cetera is all to contribute to our well-being. So whatever we do should serve that purpose of contributing to our physical and mental well-being. If we find at any time we lack physical or mental well-being, then we need to consider what is going wrong? We need to look to see what is causing our lack of physical or mental well-being.

Having considered and accepted that what we need to pay attention to is our physical and mental well-being it is reasonable to ask 'what are the causes of physical well-being?' Good external conditions do contribute to physical well-being. I advise young people to really put effort into studying because this enables them to get good physical conditions more easily. Study enables them to get the skills to acquire good physical conditions. Some who I have advised have listened to this and have put it into practice and benefited. I give this advice with a practical consideration of the young wanting companionship. Too much socialising will take away from their studies so I advise them to ensure that companionship does not obstruct their studies. This can be an issue later in life. As mentioned earlier many of the factors for physical well-being are due to external factors. However we seem to put all of our time and energy in merely acquiring external conditions.

So having put time and energy into acquiring good physical conditions then we come to a point where we do have good physical conditions, but many then feel something is lacking, we are not fully happy. When we look into the real cause of that we see that something is lacking internally. The lack of internal conditions to have joy and happiness is because we don't know what internal conditions are needed for these. We haven't paid any attention to this at all. I advise the younger generation to pay attention to the internal conditions needed to be happy and joyful. Ultimately by paying attention and acquiring the necessary internal as well as the external conditions, becomes a real factor to making us happy. Joyful and happy feelings are attributed to our mind so when we look for the causes of these we will see that the causes will also be internal mental causes.

In relation to ourselves as an individual entity it is evident that we have a body, a mind and our speech. We are connected to these three aspects of ourselves all the time, we cannot be separated from them as they are always with us. Atisha, a great Buddhist master, said that within these three attributes of body, speech and mind, the best instruction is to check one's mind. Master Atisha further said, the best friend for ourselves is mindfulness and introspection, the best instruction is to look at one's own mind and the best protection is love and compassion for others. Regarding the best instruction to look at one's own mind, this means doing an internal investigation to understand every thought and emotion within ourselves. When we investigate as to what motivates us to engage in what we do on a physical and a verbal level, we will find that it is really due to what goes on in our mind. Our physical and verbal actions are the by-product of what goes on in our mind.

If our mind is positive and imbued with kindness and caring, then our physical mannerisms and speech are imbued with kindness. When we have a state of mind imbued with kindness and compassion we experience the positive results for ourselves, and our physical actions and speech that come from that kindness benefits other. This ensures good

results for ourselves and others. When we relate to others with kindness then the natural reaction from others is love. They see our kindness as positive and are drawn to it, and a genuine sense of companionship is fostered. Because of the genuine companionship that it generates, I usually say that fostering a genuine sense of love and compassion will overcome loneliness.

The opposite to having love and compassion in our heart is to fall prey to anger. How does this feel, does anger have a positive effect on us? As we noticed from our own experience with anger and attachment we don't feel good when we are angry; our mind is troubled, our physical expression is not pleasant, our face is not appealing and our speech is not pleasing when we are in the turmoil of anger. So we see how true it is that when we are in a negative state such as anger it is destructive of our own joy and happiness, and is also destructive for others. The more we become aware of this fact of anger being self-destructive and destroying our joy and happiness, the more we accept anger as a negative emotion. That acknowledgement can diminish the anger within oneself.

There are specific techniques to overcome anger, but if we are not familiar with these, even recognising the destructiveness of anger, just this awareness can reduce anger within ourselves. This is because one generates the intention not to be influenced by anger as it is destructive of one's own happiness and is destructive to others. When we become angry the unpleasant gestures, unpleasant facial expressions and speech come spontaneously. We can relate to our own experience, when we are angry we don't have control over what we say or do. Seeing this helps us to understand others and see that they also don't have control of themselves when they are angry and so we should not blame them due to their anger. This helps us not to be upset with them.

When we really consider these points of how others, in exactly the same way, when under the influence of anger will say and do things uncontrollably, it is with this understanding that we can even develop

compassion for our enemies. Understanding that as we want happiness and don't want suffering then on that basis we can develop love and compassion for others, hence becoming more patient.

I often say when one partner comes home from having a difficult day, it is best not to question them about what is wrong, but rather to encourage them to relax, make dinner, cup of tea for them or suggest they have a shower. This will allow them to let their problems subside. The Buddhist definition of anger is: by focusing on an unappealing object to generate a mind of agitation with an intention to harm the object. So with the earlier example, asking a lot of questions when someone has just come back from a challenging day, would definitely be regarded as unappealing. In contrast, saying soothing words, cooking a meal and suggesting for them to just relax will be very appealing and helps to reduce their agitation, which will prevent them from getting angry.

We can all agree on the point that what we really wish for is happiness. The experience of happiness and joy of good companionship with others is based on developing love and compassion for others, genuine concern for others, this is the contributing factor. Anger and aversion are the damaging factors to the relationship. I'm not suggesting that all anger can be stopped right away, but I am encouraging you to see that anger is destructive to the relationship. So keeping anger in check, is beneficial to the relationship. When anger is expressed from the other's side and we respond with the like mind of anger then it escalates. Anger cannot be used to combat anger; it doesn't work that way. Tolerance is what combats anger and so we need to begin practising this with those we consider close and dear.

The main points I am emphasising here is that seeing we do have relationships then what we need to cultivate is genuine love and compassion. This then overrides infatuated attraction. It is the genuine sense of caring, showing love and compassion that helps when times are difficult and someone has problems or difficulties. The person with just

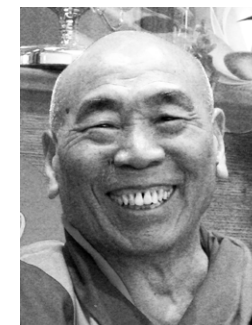
an infatuated attraction will not be there when times are difficult. It is genuine caring love and compassion that seeks to help when the other is in difficulties. I am not saying that it is possible to remove all attachment from your relationship, as ordinary beings attachment is a strong element in relationships. What I am suggesting is to cultivate genuine love and compassion as this is the means to develop beneficial companionship. Some people who had relationships but are now separated have confided in me that because the relationship was based on strong attachment and attraction, the relationship didn't last. But because there was some love and care then even though they have split up and have no desire for each other, due to the caring concern, love and compassion, their relationship seems better now after they had separated.

We will conclude here. I have shared what I feel would be beneficial with a good attitude in my mind, so if you think you can use it in your life, please use it. If you think it is irrelevant then just leave it aside. I have shared with you what I have found useful in my life, so I have shared part of my life with you. I want to thank everyone for making the effort to come along and listen. To summarise, the main point is to implement in life, to extend whatever beneficial help we can to others, not to harm others and to cultivate this attitude in our lives. This attitude will be a good companion in life.



An introduction to meditation

Day 2, 2009



Refuge Prayer

I go for Refuge until I am enlightened
To the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Highest Assembly.
From the virtuous merit that I collect,
By practising giving and other perfections,
May I attain the state of a Buddha
To be able to benefit all sentient beings.

The significance of the Refuge Prayer is to remind us to have a positive attitude, to take refuge in the Three Gems and to generate an altruistic motivation to benefit all sentient beings. It also reminds us to engage in the practice with a positive attitude, relaxing on a physical level and on top of that relaxing mentally so our mind is clear and focused. We can think, if I can contribute to that physical and mental relaxation, then I have achieved what I wanted to achieve. If we have that physical and mental relaxation then what we do will turn out well. The basic meaning of a good motivation is to have a good attitude.

Our actions, our relations to others and how fruitful our actions are is dependent on our attitude. If prior to communicating with others we

have an attitude of kindness and a wish to share with others then naturally that communication will be a gentle one. In relation to the importance of having a kind mind or attitude before engaging in any activity, Lama Tsongkhapa said, 'that which creates either positive or negative deeds, what we call Karma is the mind. In dependence on the mind the stages and fruits of our actions will be either positive or negative'.

Every religion makes a distinction between bad and good and advises to make an effort to cultivate the good. We might all agree that having a kind mind, a kind attitude is a cause for kind actions and we may agree we want to do kind actions. But we find that the causes for a kind mind are scarce whilst the conditions for a harmful mind are much more prevalent. Even the very conditions to make us happy actually seem causes to make us miserable and this seems much more prevalent.

To give a worldly analogy, money is meant to give us a happy, comfortable life but some confide in me that if you have too much money it makes you uncomfortable, unsettled and worried. As mentioned last night, our happiness is primarily dependent on our mind. So we have the means to protect our mind from being unsettled and disturbed and to apply these in our practice. What I want to re-emphasise and the main point in relation to our general welfare is the basis to achieve what we want to achieve in life is good health and sound mind.

The importance of health can't be overestimated. Something we want to achieve, if our health is not good, can be difficult to achieve because our activities are accomplished on the basis of our physical activity. Again, if our mind is not clear and focused it is difficult to achieve our goals. So physical health and a good mental state are essential for achieving any goal. The main thing to understand, which is obvious, is the interrelated connection of body and mind. What we physically do can affect our mind and what we think in our mind can affect our body. For instance, we may turn to the use of alcohol and drugs, thinking they will give us satisfaction and joy. When the mind is not happy something is sought

to gain happiness, so drugs and alcohol are consumed. When we realise that these don't actually produce happiness and try to stop we find that addiction has set in and our health is compromised.

I do not believe that alcohol and drugs are a cause for real joy and happiness, there may be some short-term lift for five or ten minutes, but they do not contribute to long-term joy. So when we lack a happy mind and see that something is lacking in our mind, or a habit or pattern of thinking is present in our mind, then we need to have a shift in our thinking and to come out of that way of thinking.

Do we have the ability to change our attitude and shift our mind? Yes. When we are in a situation, sad, depressed or frustrated we need to really see this is an attitude or pattern we are holding onto. So then seeing that this 'holding onto' is a problem, merely accepting this 'holding onto' an attitude as the problem is the beginning of a change, a shift in one's attitude. So to shift focus from what is causing the feeling of depression, sadness or frustration to the attitude of one that uplifts the mind, brings back joy and happiness to the mind. We do have that ability to decide for ourselves whether we think in a certain way.

More specifically, how can a meditation technique shift the mind from negative to positive? For example, with anger it is generally agreed to be negative and we all know by experience that anger is disturbing and uncomfortable. When we are angry we are constantly preoccupied with the object of anger. The more we think of the person or object who has harmed us as an object of our anger, the more we get angry. So we need to shift the focus of our object to a positive or neutral one. When we shift the object of focus, no longer thinking of the object of anger, no longer feeding the anger then the anger is reduced. We have the ability to do this.

Having used a more obvious example of anger, there is also the negative mind of attachment which is not as immediately obvious as negative. But if we look at infatuated attachment it causes great anxiety in the mind.

Whenever one thinks of the attachment object there is some excitement but unsettled disturbance as well. When we examine the experience of attachment we see this disturbance more clearly. So in meditation being distracted to the attractive object is clearly seen as a distraction, as a disturbance. So the antidote is to focus on an unattractive object or the unattractive aspect of the object you are attracted to and in that way the mind is released from attachment.

There are many different techniques to use, the specific technique opposing the particular delusion with anger is to change the object of focus to a positive or neutral one and the specific technique with attachment is to change the focus to an unattractive object or to an unattractive aspect of the object of attachment.

In relation to specific techniques of how to overcome delusion, how do we release the mind from delusion? When the mind has anger, it permeates our mind, and our thinking is tainted by the anger. We can all relate to how anger is so destructive. Someone with intelligence, becomes in such a destructive state with anger to the point where one might even take one's own life. This is something most valuable to oneself yet due to anger one may destroy even one's own life.

So one needs to learn to use one's mind to not be completely influenced by anger or attachment. Lama Tsongkhapa said, 'as a result of one's meditation the negative minds must lessen'. So I am sharing with you the techniques and the benefits of those techniques.

The main points in relation to managing one's own attitudes are to clearly identify where to place one's focus. Geshe Karapa said when one doesn't have the intelligence of knowing where to place one's mind, then it seems no matter what one does, it does not seem to work well for oneself. But for those with intelligence, then even the difficult circumstances can be worthwhile. So when we don't know, or lack the intelligence as to where to place our mind skilfully, we create disturbance and difficulty in our

minds. Whereas with intelligence, no matter what situation one is in, one can place the mind on a skilfully chosen object.

The benefits of meditation are that we carry positive minds through life and that we place the mind on the right object.

So now to explain the formal meditation technique, which involves adopting a specific posture, having the right intention, and choosing an appropriate object to focus on. The physical posture - this explanation comes from higher level of Buddhist teaching. In the sitting posture there is what is called the Vajra posture, which is either a full cross-legged posture or half cross-legged posture. The significance of sitting in these postures is, for those who want to enhance their meditation, the posture helps the physical condition to become more stable and overcome tiredness.

One places one's right hand on top of the left palm, with thumbs touching to form a triangle. Place your hands four inches below your navel, with the tips of the thumbs touching the navel centre. The significance of this position is that the thumbs have the nerve endings - known as 'subtle energy channels', which are related to Bodhicitta. When the tips of the thumbs touch the navel centre, it relaxes the channels, which in turn relax the body and facilitate the development of Bodhicitta. For those interested in meditation this is something significant to experience. You can try this and see the effect.

Keep the backbone straight. The relevance of this is that it prevents the two extreme states of excitement and laxity. So when we straighten the body, we can see that it clears the mind and helps the body. Straightening the physical body, also helps straighten the energy channels. So then the wind energy can flow clearly, unobstructed, this in turn helps the mind. Shoulders and arms relaxed in a natural state, free of being too tense or crouched and free of being too loose which also causes drowsiness. Having a natural relaxed body with airflow through the armpits helps

prevent laxity. The head is slightly bent forward but not too much and the chin perpendicular to chest. Having the head too high causes excitement whilst having the head too low causes dullness and laxity. When we find the right alignment of the head this also helps to prevent excitement and laxity.

Eyes are not too open or too closed, again to stop excitement or laxity. If the eyes are closed, we may think it is suitable for our focus, but if the eyes are shut for a long time one experiences a darkness in one's mind. So one keeps the eyes slightly open, with the eyesight lowered to the tip of one's nose. In relation to the jaw and mouth, be free of the extreme of the mouth being too open, this dries one's mouth and is an obstacle to long meditation. Have the lips slightly open for ventilation, even though we don't breathe through the mouth. Tongue tip touching palate, this prevents too much saliva forming in the mouth and prevents drooling. Also touching the palate prevents the mouth drying out, and keeps it moist.

These details are necessary if we wish to persevere in long meditation. So there are seven points and an eighth – which is to regulate the breath. Altogether these are called the sitting posture of Buddha Vairochana.

Next, what type of object to focus on? For concentration, any object can be used. Initially, to have a clear vivid image of the object one familiarises oneself with the physical object by looking, then closing the eyes and bringing the object to mind. A vivid appearance of the object comes and this is what we focus on in meditation. This is an important point. If one thinks it is just to focus on the physical object, then it becomes very easy to be distracted because it is something outside of ourselves. It is better to use an internal object as this allows the mind to be internalised rather than being distracted outwardly.

We can use physical objects to focus on like the Buddha, a statue or painting and then focus on the vivid image of that. If we are focusing on the Buddha image, we need to see it as having a bit of weight and

being luminous. The significance of having some weight is to prevent excitement and the significance of luminosity is to prevent laxity. At this point having clearly identified the object and how to focus on this object, next are the methods to focus and how to develop concentration. The methods we need are mindfulness and introspection. We need these two as aids to develop concentration.

The definition of concentration is combined in the two main attributes of concentration. Firstly it is a single pointed focus and secondly it has clarity and brightness, these are the two main attributes of concentration. Having identified these two, the single pointedness and the clarity and brightness we can look at the two opposites, Excitement and Laxity. Laxity is explained as the lack of clarity and brightness. So the two obstacles that obstruct concentration are when laxity occurs, the mind is still focused but it is dull, it lacks vividness and clarity and hence is an obstacle to concentration - this is laxity.

The obstacle to single pointedness is excitement, it causes distraction in the mind. When excitement occurs at a gross level the object is completely lost, when it occurs at the subtle level the object is partly focused and partly not focused. Again this is an obstacle to concentration. So with the two attributes of concentration intact then the measure of concentration is to be able to focus on the object single pointedly for as long as one wishes.

How do we develop the technique of acquiring concentration? We check, is the mind focused on the object? Mindfulness is a tool allowing constant focus on the object. Is the mind distracted or not? So to keep the mind focused on the object is mindfulness. To check whether the mind is focused on the object or not, and when distracted to bring back the focus to the object is introspection. We can understand here how mindfulness and introspection support concentration. The technique is simple, it is a matter of whether we put it into practice or not.

There are different stages of single pointed concentration. However the simple technique explained here is worthwhile to adopt. There are some specific instructions when we focus on the breath,

- The breath should not be laboured but in a natural state,
- The breath should also be free of long inhalation and short exhalation or vice versa,
- Ideally one inhales and exhales through one's nostrils silently.

I want to emphasise the point from last night that the factor in having a joyful and happy mind in life is good relationships and companionship. So as a group it is important to really foster good relationships, when someone is mentally or physically low or sick to help them, to lift them up. We don't necessarily need money to do this. When we aren't well we really appreciate this so then we can give it back. The real basis for the group to expand and benefit others is to nurture each other and provide companionship to each other. Try to encompass those that are alone at Christmas or on their birthday, to extend kindness, uplift and help. So try to see how you can really uplift other's minds.



The Eight Verses of Thought Transformation

Day 1, 2010



I wonder how it came about that I am here today? What actually prompted me to come here today was an invitation from your small Buddhist group here in Warrnambool. So now that we are here together, it would be good to reflect on the purpose of our gathering.

Firstly, it would be good to spend some time in meditation. What is the appropriateness of doing meditation? When we look into our own being we see that we want both physical and mental well-being, this is what constitutes our well-being. Meditation can help.

As beginners we may wonder what would be the result of having a physically relaxed body and mind. The experience of having a physically relaxed body and mind is joy and happiness and we all want to experience happiness. We can classify this into the two categories: physical well-being and mental well-being. Since we all strive for happiness it is worthwhile to consider how we go about obtaining happiness. The natural inclination of wanting to be happy and not wanting any suffering is not exclusive to humans. All beings, including animals such as dogs and cats, want to be happy and do not wish to experience any suffering.

When we consider where this wish stems from we can see that it comes from a sense of identity of a self. This 'self' desires those things that are conducive to happiness and wants to avoid those things that contribute to suffering. So this wish for joy and happiness comes along with a personal identity. Those conducive conditions on both the physical level and on the mental level sum up what is conducive for our happiness. Due to that natural inclination to have what is conducive for our happiness we seek external conditions which will contribute to our happiness.

Many of us who have reached a certain mature age and have managed to acquire sufficient material possessions could say that we have many comforts in our life. When we pay attention and analyse our situation in life we can say that we have adequate material comforts, yet feel that something is lacking when it comes to our inner sense of well-being. What is lacking is a genuine sense of a relaxed mind and this results in the lack of inner mental well-being.

When we reach this point of realising that we lack a relaxed state of mind we ask the question 'is there any method to bring about a peaceful state of mind?' The first thing to recognise is that the mind is very distracted and easily disturbed. On the mental level our mind is preoccupied with what will happen in the future or dwells on the past, so it is not focused on the present. Clearly the future has not yet happened but we generate worry and anxiety in the mind about what might happen. If we were to apply a technique to reduce that anxiety and worry and achieve a real sense of peace, then practising that method would be really worthwhile.

Is such a naturally settled and calm state of mind possible? We need to acknowledge that it is distractions that cause the turmoil in our mind, so even by just bringing our focus inward it calms and relaxes our mind. When we begin to train our mind to focus inward and not allow the mind to be distracted this brings calmness and clarity. This training and familiarity helps to protect our mind from distractions.

So, this is the meditation technique that helps us to gain an acute intelligence and a wisdom which discriminates between what is beneficial to oneself and what is harmful to oneself. When a person adopts this technique then whatever they do will be done in a calm and dignified way whatever the situation. Because of this sense of calm and ease this meditation technique not only benefits themselves but also others that they come into contact with.

Indeed, this intelligence, which I refer to as analytical wisdom, is very necessary and important. I especially advise youngsters to choose good friends who enhance their studies, their right behaviour and influence them in a positive way. Such a student can protect themselves and lead a good life, sharing with their friends and protecting their studies. As I share with the younger generation it is really important to nurture that time of learning. Relationships and interest in sexual relationships and friendship are only natural but it is very important to maintain the integrity of one's study time because this is such an important stage in one's maturing life.

To understand the benefits of meditation practice and it being worthwhile in our life we need to realise that one's well-being is very much in relation to one's mind. Meditation is very necessary to have calmness and clarity in one's mind and in particular to have a sense of kindness. This is such an important benefit for oneself and others, and also a protection for oneself. When we consider what causes our problems and difficulties in life we may look externally but the real cause is our mental state being prone to disturbance by even the slightest external thing. So, to have one's mind in a state of calm and ease and not to be disturbed by external things is the way to have a peaceful state of mind.

Identifying the positive states of mind, such as kindness and concern for others, strengthens this and reduces the disturbances, and this then is what we call meditation. That which produces the positive mind and protects one from the negative is meditation. Identifying the positive

mind and familiarising our mind with it is what we need to work on. Keeping full attention and focus on the internal object is what meditation requires. (Pause for meditation)

Readjust the physical posture by sitting up straight. This allows the energies to flow well. It is not true that one has to necessarily sit cross-legged to meditate. While sitting straight induces a fresh state of mind, most importantly one needs to sit in a comfortable position and have a positive state of mind.

The necessity of having a positive state of mind is because if we have a negative state of mind then whatever we do will have a negative influence, but when we have a positive state of mind whatever we do will bring good effects. Meditation practice is a commitment to having positive states of mind, focusing inward and not following the distractions. Bringing the focus inward is hard to maintain without having an object to focus on so we will maintain our focus using the natural in and out of our own breath.

As far as the technique is concerned it is not that difficult to understand, but we really do need to make the effort to keep the mind focused on the chosen object. It is important not to start doing it half-heartedly as this sets up a habit of drifting back and forth, in and out of focus. It is important to keep good focus but as beginners our practice can be frequent sessions of short duration so that we do not strain the mind. Establishing a good pattern from the beginning is important. Over time we may come to a point of actually having a long attention span and our focus can be maintained for an hour or two.

If we are in a relationship, we need to be considerate and have the agreement of our partner to meditate for that long. One need not be religious at all to have the benefit of meditation, so even though the technique comes from a religious source we do not need to be religious to get positive results. I mentioned this so that you can rest assured that

if you do not have a religious mind there is no pressure to adhere to any religious beliefs to get the benefit from meditation. What it really comes back to is to have a kind mind. The way to have a kind mind falls into two main categories of generating love and compassion. That is the main thing needed to have a kind mind.

Since we all naturally carry these two positives of love and compassion for others we need to recognise and strengthen that in our mind. To generate a genuine, kind state of mind the two main tools are love and compassion. When we engage in this and further strengthen the love and compassion in ourselves we benefit by generating a real sense of joy and ease within ourselves and because of this sense of love and compassion in ourselves others will naturally be attracted to this.

So whoever has this and shares in this will experience mutual beneficial love, compassion and kindness for each other. When we look into the actual sources of love and joy we see that what brings good companions is if one has generated natural love and kindness and then naturally others are attracted to this and we then have many companions. So, love and compassion are the source of having good companions.

Some people say that a great source of joy to them is their pets. This is because they are companions and companions bring a sense of joy. Those who tell me that pets bring joy say it is because the pets always want love and affection and if they receive this then their owners feel something in return. This is the benefit of having companions. What constitutes this is a genuine sense of love and concern for others and then they respond in return.

The states of love and compassion support this. We need to weaken the states of mind which are not conducive to love and compassion. When we lose compassion then naturally the sense of joy and happiness is lost in one's mind. So that is why I recommend maintaining and protecting a genuine sense of love and compassion in the mind.

In my observations those individuals who don't pay attention to love, compassion and maintaining kindness, feel lonely as they don't have companionship with others. They may even develop a sense of resentment to others thinking that they are ignoring them. This is also due to not liking them. We can recognise this and see that it is due to one's loss of love and compassion and concern for others. The solution is to practise generating love and compassion and voluntarily expressing love and compassion. To do this practice we start with those close to us and who we associate with, and then we can expand out from those close to us rather than being kind to those distant but not being kind and loving to those in one's own proximity.

From a Buddhist point of view, the definition of love is wishing others to have happiness and joy and the definition of compassion is wishing others to be free of suffering. If we do not have these two attitudes, then the natural inclination to help and benefit others will be lacking.

When we consider the value of love and compassion it is really priceless. It is love and compassion which really maintain our relationships with others. When I give advice I emphasise to really generate and maintain love and compassion for those whom we have a relationship with. Of course, in a worldly relationship there will also be attachment. But it is the love and compassion that make it a really sound relationship.

Looking into further examples of love and compassion we may consider who would come and extend help to oneself when one is distressed. If in times of difficulty others desert us that is a sign that they lack real love and compassion and kindness for us. Parents never give up on their children and while this seems like a genuine instinct it is a clear sign of love and compassion for the child. Giving help when one is in need is a clear sign of real love and compassion.

We all need companions and I stress this because at the time of difficulty we need someone to care for us and to nurture us. To find a companion

who has this love and compassion for us we need to generate love and compassion from our side and then this attracts others who will show love and compassion to us. This is the way to attract companions. So, this is an introduction on how to live a meaningful life. Any questions?

Question: How do we loosen our attachment to our children?
 Answer: There are Buddhist methods to reduce attachment in general. If you are familiar with these you can apply them, but I think also, if one generates a genuine love and compassion this will also reduce one's attachment to them. On a worldly level this may seem contradictory. The instruction for love is to see the other as pleasing but wouldn't this cause attachment? But in Buddhism the advice is to also apply wisdom, so even seeing the object as pleasing and attractive, with the wisdom of emptiness there will be no attachment on that basis.

Question: I really hate people for a few days, how can I overcome this?
 Answer: Really see the faults of anger and then do not give into that. When anger is extended outward it is often associated with annoyance towards others and we try to justify it. If we can see that the other person wants to be happy and doesn't want to suffer, just like us, then why be annoyed with them as they are just like us? Of course, the teachings acknowledge that practising patience towards someone unappreciative and ungrateful is one of the hardest types of patience, but we should not give up and we should keep trying to generate patience.

One main antidote to anger is practising patience but for the beginner this may be hard so perhaps focus on the breath to settle the very angry mind. When one is in an angry state it can be very hard to analyse and think things out, so just focus on the breath. While both states of mind of anger and attachment are harmful it is much easier for us to see the faults of anger. If we get angry we can lose friends, whereas in the case of attachment it seems to have some benefit to us by bringing people closer. I tease my students that they seem to be in a constant state of fluidity, being close, then distant, then close again, due to the flow of anger and

attachment. So, when describing the relationship, the answer is obscure since it is pleasurable sometimes and unpleasant at other times. So, to make it more pleasurable, generate genuine love and compassion.

Question: How does trust fit into this view of relationships?

Answer: What I normally stress in terms of trust is that the more genuine sense of love and compassion one generates the more the trust is strengthened. To relate a personal story, I once stayed in a Tibetan household for 10 days where the husband seemed older, the wife was younger and there were a few children. I noticed that the wife nagged and spoke nastily. Her husband didn't respond to it and he later told me that he just kept quiet because if he spoke it would just lead to conflict. He felt because she was younger he didn't fully trust her with money and he thought she might leave him. He related further that while he harboured this thought of mistrust when he went to get his child from Darjeeling School they had an accident and he couldn't walk for a year leaving him at the mercy of others. His wife nurtured and cared for him the whole time, so now he didn't worry.

So, in the difficult times if one has a genuine sense of love and compassion then naturally one will extend care. The sense of trust comes from a genuine sense of love and compassion. This man is a good-natured person and he said they make a good income from a restaurant and another farm. They make good money but he has a habit of gambling and that is why the wife nags him. His wife also confided that he is forgetful and leaves things behind.

Day 2

It would be good to do some meditation, as we did last night. Meditation has become acceptable and everyone talks about meditating. The reason for this is because meditation seems to be something useful. Many people are very disturbed because they are focused on many things in

their life. So the question is, is there a way to settle down the mind and bring a calmness into their mind? They are attracted to meditation to settle down their mind.

For those who have some significant dissatisfaction in their lives, meditation can be very useful. It can be useful even for those who have not come from this situation but realise that being too involved in their busy lives is an obstacle to satisfaction. These people sometimes come up to me and say they would like to get away and go into an isolated forest. But they feel in a dilemma about not being able to give up their job and get a balance in their lives. One individual was saying he does have money and has a good job but can't leave his job; however, he is not feeling fulfilled or fully satisfied and is thinking what can he do? Besides these particular individuals, this dissatisfaction is a general issue in society, many people do not feel fully satisfied, fulfilled or content.

As I said yesterday, being obsessed with the external world, focusing on this, then that, is what causes one to be in that discontented state. With meditation, as we look within ourselves and gain understanding of ourselves, we will start to feel more fulfilled, more content and we can relate this to being the benefits of meditating.

The sense of feeling lost and unfulfilled really disturbs people's mind. Meditating brings an internal strength to the mind. Those who feel a complete sense of loss, feel that there is no point in living and not any point in going on, are in a dangerous state.

There are certain things in life which can be overcome just by changing our state of mind. These may be insignificant things but we get caught up in them, exaggerating them. Of course, if it is a major thing we may think this is justified. But when we actually look we see it is usually a very small insignificant thing which we have exaggerated to see everything as gloom and doom. We can change our attitude quite easily and by seeing things from a different perspective come out of that disturbed feeling.

In the past, teachers had to stress the benefits of meditation. Now, I don't need to say this so much because people come and tell me the benefits of meditation. Some individuals reach a certain state in life where they think nothing is working and withdraw within themselves, staying in their rooms, sitting in the corner with head bent down in despair. They have fallen into a pattern of thinking, I am no good. If they listen to me and I can reach out to them, advise them that it is their way of thinking that is causing this. We live in Australia with lots of resources, sitting in a corner in despair, as if that is of benefit, is it giving oneself any benefit? So instead try changing your way of thinking. Those who follow this do brighten up. Others think, what he is saying is fine, but I am comfortable where I am. In life, there are certain situations we fall into and these are dependent on our attitudes and when our attitudes change, our situation can change very significantly.

Here is a story of a situation being changed due to one's attitude. A person connected to myself, on one occasion, came to me looking very downcast and said her husband had left her. She was crying in despair. In consoling her, I said, 'the reason you are crying is because you feel you have lost something but all you have lost is rubbish and now you have gained real freedom for yourself. Thinking of this she immediately stopped crying and was feeling better. She said, 'what you say may be quite true but I don't know that you can say my husband was rubbish'. But the point is by changing one's way of thinking one can change one's experience of circumstances.

Our state of mind is conducive to our peace and happiness, so we need to recognise that and change it. Also to notice that there are many hidden treasures within oneself, recognise these qualities, bring them out and cultivate them. There are many negative states within us and these are known as unsubdued minds. How do we subdue these? A subdued mind is a happy mind; an unsubdued mind is an unhappy mind.

Take the example of anger. It disturbs our mind. There is no one who is engaging in an angry mind who is relaxed and happy at the same time. Instead the experience is a disturbing one. We really need to identify what anger is within ourselves and have a complete understanding of this. The experience of anger is one where there is no control over oneself and one is disturbed, unhappy and suffering. Understanding this also helps one understand others when they are angry. If one does not understand this, one is likely to retaliate and to respond to anger with anger. No good outcome can come from this.

When one's partner is angry and annoyed, we need to see that they are uncomfortable with that. Once one recognises this disturbance in one's partner one can have compassion for them and then not respond with anger but with compassion and kindness. This is more likely to be of benefit than responding with anger and in this way we can benefit our partners when they are disturbed with anger. Indeed, this is the advice of how to deal with any individuals who have delusions active in their mind. When someone is upset due to anger, the solution is not to retaliate with anger but to give them a nice meal, a drink or nice clothing. But for someone affected by strong attachment, it is not advisable to give them food or clothing.

For those in a committed relationship with a partner, when they come back home from work grumpy and annoyed don't start with questions, this is likely to make them more upset and annoyed. Instead say, 'have a shower and I will make you a nice meal'. They don't want to talk about their situation but by having some space they can come out of it themselves. This is real support and concern for the other. If we are not going to be kind and really concerned for those we live with, then who are we going to be kind to? Some I have advised this to, have said this has been really beneficial in their life. When I come next time, I hope to hear from you that this advice has been really useful. Adopting these positive attitudes is something that I think really makes life useful.

I say this is real Dharma practice because it is kindness based on logic and real concern, the altruistic wish to benefit others out of a real sense of concern. To summarise the points, when we are able to implement positive attitudes and to cultivate positive minds there will be good results and benefits.

It will be good to do a few minutes of meditation. The appropriate meditation position is sitting straight. Bring one's entire attention to the positive object. Distraction is a memory of a particular instant, or a situation that is causing distress. So one hundred percent resolve to not be influenced by that memory. We feel distress because we are allowing the mind to be influenced by that memory. (Pause for meditation)

What we need to derive from this discussion is the practical benefits of meditation, we can implement these in our daily life. Besides the profound benefits mentioned before, there are also physical benefits to meditation. While we are meditating we can feel relaxed. Meditating regularly has benefits for our health. When we are holding stress pain in the neck and shoulders, tension builds up and this can cause diseases in our body. There is a relationship between our body and mind and as our mind relaxes, our body benefits.

According to Tibetan medical texts, the body operates on the basis of the four elements, earth, water, wind and fire, when these are in balance and in harmony we have good health. When we relax the body in meditation, it relaxes the four elements and brings them into harmony. Disharmony of the four elements on the subtle level brings more obvious sickness to the body. Too much heat causes fever in the body, too little water element causes dehydration, too much wind energy disturbance can bring mental disturbance such as hallucinations. This is noticeable even in infants who are crying and disturbed, their mothers are not able to comfort them, this may be the wind element out of balance. In regard to parenting skills, it may be a common fact that the firstborn child is difficult because of the parent's

lack of experience, then later babies become easier to care for and this indicates that the disturbances are more skilfully dealt with.

Also in relation to ourselves, the 'I' possessing the body and mind. But this mind is not a distinct entity. When the body and the mind have well-being, then the 'I' experiences well-being. The 'I' or self is not a distinct entity. It is indeed important to pay attention and do the analysis of this relationship, between body, mind and the 'I' or 'me' as a person. When my body is in pain, I experience pain. When my mind is mentally disturbed, emotionally disturbed by someone, then I experience disturbance. When it comes to food we protect ourselves by the foods we eat. Similarly, on a mental level, we need to protect ourselves from the states of mind that in disturbing the mind also disturb oneself.

I believe I have covered the essence of the text. My character is to adopt the Dharma with a very practical approach of perceiving and receiving the benefits right now. That is how I relate to the Dharma. I deem this important because when people find the Dharma immediately beneficial in a practical way then they develop a positive interest in it. If the benefits are in some distant situation and not immediately relevant then it is much harder to see the benefit and become really interested. In relating to the Dharma practice, the essence of the Dharma is love and compassion. Yesterday I spent a lot of time on how the positive effects are to be made meaningful in daily life by having our mind imbued with love and compassion. Our life is made more meaningful by embracing this love and compassion right now. These verses show us how to cultivate love and compassion in our daily life, how to relate to and behave towards others with love and compassion. This brings real meaning to one's life. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama says, the world is paying a little more attention to love and compassion.

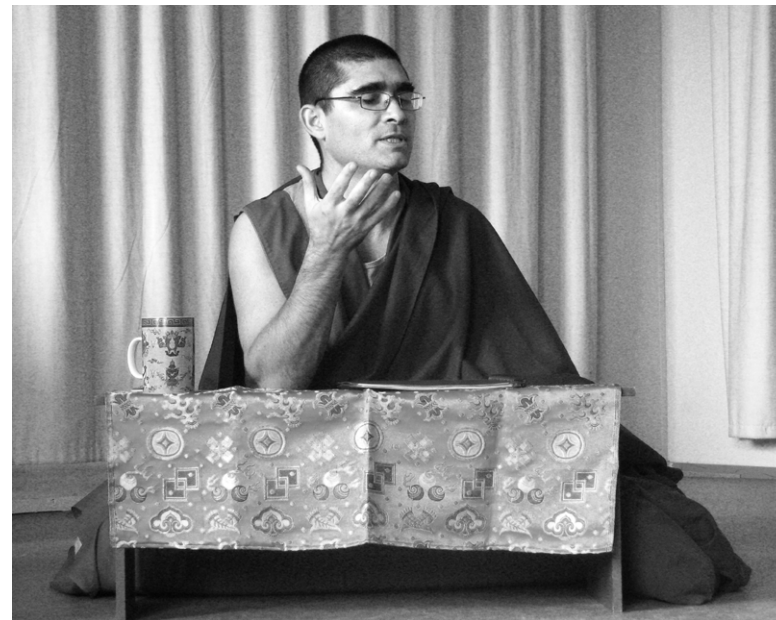
His Holiness the Dalai Lama says even the politicians are now discussing the attributes of love and compassion. Whether they mean it or not is yet to be seen, but that they are talking about it shows the value in it has been

understood. Politicians speak about love and compassion because they say they are working for the welfare of others and the alleviation of their suffering and this is love and compassion if it is done genuinely and honestly.

It is through love and compassion that one really does benefit others, so rather than leaving it up to the politicians one has to develop this for oneself. This is really necessary because there are some who hold the view that by destroying the other then they will have happiness. This is the basis for wars and so on. Like in Iraq, they said getting rid of Saddam Hussein would bring peace and happiness. So now, not only do we lack peace and happiness in Iraq but even those supposedly going in to create this peace and happiness, are themselves experiencing only suffering.

In Australia we haven't lost many lives in Iraq but we have spent billions of dollars and what happiness has resulted? When we say the words 'we are doing good for others' but the real intention is just self-grasping then the result will not be positive and will result in difficulties.

So true love and compassion is motivated from a mind free of intense self-cherishing and having real concern for others. Lobsang from New Zealand, his father lived in India, they were travelling to Dharamsala to see their brother. They were travelling on a train and he was putting his bag under the seat. An Indian passenger said to him that it was wet under the seat and instead to put it up high. While he was doing that, the other passenger took off with his other small bag, with his money and possessions. This is an example to show what may appear to be done out of kindness and care is not necessarily so, it is dependent on the actual intention of the person.



Ven. Michael Lobsang Yeshe, translator for Venerable Geshe Doga



Ven. Michael Lobsang Yeshe with Warrnambool students (left to right) Elaine Leong, Lauren King, Jo Keith and Larry Abrahams



Venerable Geshe Doga with group after the Teaching, Warmambool, 2009

Practising patience

Day 1, 2011



As with the introduction about myself, as well as the purpose of coming here, it is indeed a great pleasure to see many old friends again and meet new people, so I'm very happy to be here today.

As I regularly emphasise in every gathering that we have, it is important that we have good intent and a friendly attitude. That means when we come together we try to greet each other as friends and to have an enjoyable, happy time together, that's what I feel is the purpose of a gathering such as this. I feel that this possibility of sharing joy and happiness comes from the great potential that we all have as human beings. As human beings we do have this great potential to be able to generate happiness and secure an environment for ourselves and others where happiness can be promoted and utilised. I feel this is one of the purposes or meanings of one's life.

On a personal level, when we consider what is most essential in our life, it really comes down to two main things, good health on a physical level, and having a happy, clear and bright state of mind on a mental level. I feel these two things are what contribute to overall well-being

in our lives, and when we understand and recognise this, we need to do everything possible to protect these within ourselves.

When we actually question ourselves about what we are doing in our daily life, from the morning when we wake up we start becoming very busy, all the way up to the end of the day we are constantly busy. If we really question ourselves as to why we are busy, the ultimate answer is that it is with the intention to secure our well-being that is really the ultimate purpose of being busy.

On a more mundane level we might think that being busy, especially in our jobs, allows us to make money. But if we actually look further into it, it is our intention and belief that with that money we will be able to acquire comforts for our life and well-being. So ultimately our intention is that it will make us happier. While the intention of making money is so that we have a happier, more contented life, if we actually questioned further is this really the case? Then we would find that it is not necessarily true, that having a lot of money and wealth doesn't necessarily contribute to a happier life. On the contrary we find there are those who may not have that much wealth and money but have quite a joyful, happy and content life. This shows that these qualities do not depend on the external conditions.

It is worthwhile for us to really investigate what contributes to our happiness. When we consider our happiness and well-being, it falls as mentioned earlier, into two categories, our physical happiness or well-being and our mental happiness and well-being. In relation to what contributes to our physical well-being, we could then of course safely assume that those who have a lot of wealth and money have access to external things which contribute to their comfort on a physical level. But we see that those who may have a lot of means for physical comfort are not totally content and happy and those who may not have so much wealth and money are quite happy and content.

When we analyse why that is, what that actually illustrates is that while a wealthy person may have external means for their well-being they may lack something which contributes to their mental happiness, which is internal conditions. This shows that in contrast to those who don't have much physical wealth and so forth, external wealth, yet are happy and joyful, that the one who lacks external means has the actual internal conditions to be happy and because they are not deprived of the internal conditions which make the mind happy, even in spite of lack of physical conditions and material wealth, they can still be happy. Whereas the one who is wealthy may be lacking the internal conditions for happiness.

If these two situations were presented to choose from, that of being really wealthy and influential but unhappy internally, or not having much wealth and grand things around but being quite content and happy internally. If I were to make a choice then I would personally opt for a happy mind in spite of not having material things. When we further analyse the conditions, what are the actual internal conditions that become the cause for a happy state of mind? When we think about it, it would start to become apparent that internal conditions are none other than a positive state of mind or a positive attitude. So depending on our attitude, when we have a positive frame of mind then that positive frame of mind is what actually contributes to internal well-being and happiness. When we begin to recognise what that positive state of mind is then it is in our own interest that we try to protect and cultivate it and also protect whatever positive state of mind that we already have, so we don't lose it or let it decline. It should become the most important thing in our lives.

Now in relation to that internal condition for a happy mind, called a positive attitude, it is not something that we are actually deprived of from the beginning, in fact, we all have the potential for a positive state of mind. Many of us already have a very positive state of mind even though temporarily we might have difficulty maintaining it. We

definitely have that potential. So foremost, it is most essential that we actually recognise that we do have that positive state of mind which contributes to a happy state of mind. It is not as if it is something that we have to completely construct from the beginning. We already have that potential within ourselves and when we recognise this our challenge is to protect the positive state of our mind, to strengthen and further increase it.

And if temporarily it seems that our positive state of mind may be waning, it is a temporary situation, where we need to find techniques to further rejuvenate it. These are two essential tasks for ourselves. The question is how do we do that? We do this by protecting, and having control over our minds.

What do we need to protect our minds from? What do we have to have control over, or how do we control our mind? What we need to protect our mind from is the discursive thoughts and states of mind, such as the many unruly thoughts. Discursive thoughts are actually the main causes for disturbance in one's mind, and can be further explained, as doubtful states of mind. The Tibetan word, which summarises all this, is a superstitious state of mind.

His Holiness, the Dalai Lama mentioned recently, in his teachings in Melbourne, that it is our superstitious state of mind, which actually causes the unwanted fears and anxiety. He related stories from his own childhood, when the sweepers in the Potala Palace would scare him by saying that in the dark corridors there are ghosts. He said that because he heard this from the cleaners, he then developed that superstition in his mind that there might be ghosts. So whenever he came into a dark corridor, he would feel like the hair on his neck was standing on end, because he had that fearful thought. He mentioned that was actually absurd, there were no ghosts in the palace, but nevertheless, because that superstitious doubt was implanted in his mind as a child, he actually used to get frightened.

If we relate that to a personal incident in our life, for those who are living with partners for example, when at home your partner is meant to return at a certain, specific time, if they happen to be late, for some reason or another, the mind, the superstitious mind or doubtful mind may start thinking, why are they late? They shouldn't be. And then actually one begins to speculate, speculation like, where are they going, where are they going and not coming home...perhaps they are seeing someone else? So then, with all of that speculation that one has already gone through, when the partner does return home, one will be already worked up to be feeling annoyed and upset. When they return one might not have good gestures, and may not greet them warmly, and actually be quite agitated and angry. However, when we look back, it's actually that doubtful and superstitious state of mind that caused all of that. This is just one example of an incident.

In fact, if we honestly looked into ourselves, and how our minds work, we would often see that we create the worst case scenario for ourselves, and that it is caused by all these superstitious and doubtful states of mind. We are creating the experience of a lot of angst, fear and anger, from our own negative and superstitious state of mind.

Two further examples I could relate from my own experience: a lady that I knew, a young lady, was riding a bike and had a fall. Soon after she had her fall, when she was getting up, she was really so afraid and trembling with the fear of something that could have happened. When in fact, there was no obvious injury, and she had no broken bones, but she was trembling. Later she related that she was really fearful with the prospect that she could have maybe broken an arm or a leg, and if that happened, then she would lose her job, and then if she lost her job all her income, everything was at stake. So she was going on about this whole worst case scenario, when in fact nothing happened at all. She barely had a scratch.

Then another incident occurred when I was in Brisbane teaching, two ladies were just coming back from a motorcar ride, and apparently the brake had failed, and they had a small accident. Actually, they just went off the road and the car stalled. That was a small incident that happened, but when they came out of it, again one of them was really shivering and trembling a lot. And so again, with that prospect of having the brake fail, and going off the side of the road, the whole worst case scenario that something could have happened, might have broken, dominated her state of mind. I explained and pointed out that nothing's wrong, you haven't actually hit anything, there's no injuries on your body, there's nothing wrong, so just relax and rest for a while. And she sat down and relaxed, and after an hour or so, they started to laugh, and everything was normal again.

The main point I am relating here, with these examples, is in fact when we think about it, many of our worries and anxieties are not based on reality. We must really recognise and understand that a lot of the worries that we have are just based on speculation about what could happen in the future. We are always coming up with worst case scenarios in our own minds, which then brings a lot of unnecessary angst, worry, feeling down and depressed. This is really something, if we can recognise it and understand that our own mind is creating this, and that we can protect our mind from doing this, that is something we really need to put some effort into.

Again the point is that a lot of our worries and so forth come from a mere superstitious state of mind, mere speculation of events which have not actually occurred at all. For example, there are those who worry what will happen to them ten or fifteen years down the road. Their worries and angst are based on speculation that something terrible could happen, or their situation could be really bad. In fact, none of that has actually occurred, and there is no guarantee it will happen. But if we decide within ourselves that it is going to happen, that something bad is going to happen, that will then cause unnecessary worry.

What this points out is simply, that if we give in to our negative states of mind, our superstitious negative state of mind, then we actually create unnecessary unhappiness within our mind, we actually lose our happy state of mind.

That's what takes place when we give in to our unnecessary, superstitious thoughts and worries, it is due to not having been able to protect one's mind, or control one's mind from that influence.

If there is a technique which can protect our mind, that we can actually gain some control over our mind, where we don't have to be influenced, we don't have to be dominated by the superstitious thoughts, and unnecessary doubts and worry and so forth. If there is a technique to then protect and control our mind, then wouldn't it be worthwhile to actually apply that technique? We would then gain real protection, and control of our state of mind, which then naturally means protecting our calmness, peacefulness and happiness.

There is such a technique which helps to protect our mind, and gain control over our mind, so that we maintain a level of calmness and peace within, and this technique is referred to in our tradition, as meditation. Meditation is a technique which provides the means to really have genuine control over one's mind, and to protect one's mind. Protecting one's mind against what? Meditation protects us from those unnecessary, superstitious thoughts, discursive thoughts which lead on to worries, angst, depression and so forth, and thus from all of the unwanted, unnecessary mental angst.

In summary until we have control over our own mind, we will not have the real opportunity to have genuine calmness and peace within. Control over our own mind comes from within oneself, by developing it within one's own self, we will avoid the adverse results of the negative states of mind, the speculative, superstitious mind. Furthermore, in relation to objects or situations that we focus on, we do have a choice

as to what we want to focus on. However, there are certain things that whenever we think about or focus on cause us angst and anguish. We need to really identify those kinds of things, where there is a situation or a person or an object that as soon as it comes to our mind, and we think about it, and this brings us angst. We need to distance ourselves from such disturbing objects. We need to try to find, to adopt a technique, where we don't need to be concerning ourselves with those objects.

What we need to do, is to be able to really identify the kind of objects which cause us angst. When I refer to angst, there are levels of angst which occupy us with thinking about a particular object or person, the angst that it causes within can be to the extent where we lose sleep, and we may also lose our appetite. We might not be able to really enjoy even a meal anymore, because of the mind being completely preoccupied, and completely consumed by that unnecessary angst and worry. Thinking about that object really ruins the peaceful state of our mind. Therefore, that is what we need to protect ourselves from, with a technique that allows us to deliberately and intentionally distance ourselves from those objects.

Now again, there are certain positive things that we need to intentionally focus on, and adopt for ourselves. So even within our attitudes and states of mind, we need to reach a point where we are able to clearly distinguish the positive ones, which we can cultivate, nourish, and further develop into a happy state of mind. And the other kind of negative attitudes, like unnecessary fears, paranoia, angst, worries and doubts, which we can eliminate, and totally abandon. As we develop this practice of meditation, we become more discerning about when our mind is happy or disturbed.

To explain a little bit further about the meaning of meditation, the literal translation of the Tibetan word 'gom' is to familiarise. Having explained that there are certain positive states of mind, positive

attitudes and positive objects, what we need to familiarise ourselves in meditation, is an object which is either positive or neutral. An object that does not cause negativities to arise within oneself.

Thus having identified the object of meditation, how we meditate upon it is to familiarise our mind with that object, again and again, and thus develop our focus and attention on that positive object. To the extent that we familiarise our self with that object, our mind becomes naturally more calm and peaceful. As well, as we familiarise ourselves with focusing on the positive object, naturally we will also decrease our attention and focus on negative objects, that we seem to focus on quite easily. We focus on negative objects easily because of the familiarity gained from the time and energy we have already given in our lives to focusing on negative things. So now we have to transform. The transformation that needs to take place within ourselves, is that we decrease our familiarity with our focusing on negative objects, and increase our familiarity with focusing on positive objects. The process of familiarising ourselves with positive objects is called meditation.

Having mentioned about meditation, we can now actually adopt the meditation technique for a few minutes. One of the conditions for the practice of meditation is to have an upright and relaxed physical posture. Likewise, it is good for us to ensure that we have a really relaxed state of mind, particularly try to bring up an energetic, fresh and clear state of mind.

And then as mentioned earlier, for meditation practice we need to choose an object to focus on, so the object we will choose for our practice of meditation now is on the breath, which is very significant, it is said that focusing on one's breath becomes a very appropriate meditation object for those who are afflicted by a lot of discursive thoughts, i.e. a very busy mind.

In order to overcome a very discursive and busy mind, focusing on

the breath becomes a really appropriate and good object to focus on. Therefore, using the definition of meditation explained earlier, we develop a single pointed focus on the breath itself. We are just where we are, focusing on our natural in breath and out breath, and maintaining our entire focus on that awareness of the breath coming in and going out. Familiarising ourselves with that object, the breath becomes our meditation project now.

The meditation technique entails a single pointed focus on the object, so the object we are meditating on now is our own breath, and in order to apply a single pointed focus on the breath, what we need to do is to commit ourselves to not allowing our mind to be influenced by any other discursive thoughts or any other forms of distractions.

To get the benefit of the practice, we commit ourselves to not focus on anything else other than our own breath. This commitment is essential, if we don't commit this to ourselves that is when our mind becomes very easily swayed and distracted. All sorts of different kinds of thoughts infringe, and then we never get the main point, and we never really get the rewards of the practice of meditation. Therefore, as prescribed in the Buddhist teachings, we need not have a long span of attention or focus for a long duration. It is even advised to have a short session, and really single pointedly focus in that short time. It is advised that initially we have short sessions of meditation but try to do them more frequently, and to maintain that practice continuously at a regular time each day.

So thus for our purpose of meditation now, let us all really commit ourselves to have a complete 100 percent withdrawal from all other distractions. That includes all thoughts, recollections of the past, speculation about the future and any other random distractions. Bring our entire focus and attention just on our breath. And thus for the next few minutes our only concern is to focus entirely on our breath. In this way we will apply the meditation technique. (Pause for Meditation)

To apply the proper technique of meditation it is essential, even within a short duration of meditation practice, that the most important thing that we need to be working towards is maintaining our focus on the object. If we allow our mind to become periodically distracted and don't really make much effort on maintaining a continuous focus on the object, then that in itself becomes a bad habit. Then whenever we try and meditate we might be seemingly in the right posture and so forth, but actually our mind just becomes completely distracted and maintains that distraction. This will cause weariness, and instead of getting benefit from the practice of meditation, we might start becoming quite weary from practising meditation. This occurs when we have not been able to maintain the actual focus, we've not actually applied the real appropriate technique of meditation. This is something which we need to remind ourselves from the onset, that for even a short duration, one needs to really try to maintain and put all our energy and effort into maintaining our focus on the object.

Initially for a beginner, when you first apply this technique of simply just focusing on the breath, you might find your mind becomes quite relaxed and it is quite soothing and calming for the mind. If one is sincere and applies the right technique even for a short time, even within a span of a few minutes, when we apply that technique our initial experience may be really very positive. Now if we don't maintain our practice on a regular basis, or just do it periodically, then we might actually start to lose that initial positive effect that we got from meditation.

If we allow the bad habit of our mind becoming distracted, then in fact we might start becoming quite wary of the actual technique of meditation, and then reach a point where, if meditation is talked about or suggested we feel like, 'aw I don't want to try that again, there's no benefit from that'. That is not the fault of the actual technique but rather of not having applied or not maintained the proper technique on a continuous basis.

Recapping the main point that I mentioned earlier, what is most essential for our well-being is actually twofold, that is maintaining our well-being both on a physical level and a mental level; we need to secure the good conditions for both.

In general, most Australians would have the essential things that provide physical comfort, physical well-being, this is not something that you are deprived of. However, what could be missing, are the conditions for mental well-being. There are certain factors which hinder the positive conditions for our mental well-being. And for the majority of us we find that this is the case. However, we need to again recognise that we are not deprived of the potential, we all have the potential to acquire the appropriate conditions for mental well-being. This is something that we innately have, we already have that potential to apply or to acquire the positive conditions for mental well-being. We need to recognise this, and then having recognised it, we can access the techniques of how to acquire the appropriate conditions for mental well-being, as we apply them we get the benefit.

To further develop this, we need to make sure that while we actually have the physical conditions or external conditions that we need for our physical well-being, we also need to ensure those physical conditions do not become a hindrance or an obstacle to acquiring positive mental conditions. If we are content and happy, and merely just focus on external conditions and feel that is the answer to our happiness, then that would be a situation where we are causing the external conditions to hinder developing the internal conditions for our mental well-being. We must recognise this, and as we utilise the external conditions also work towards developing the internal conditions for our mental well-being, by applying the meditation technique on a regular basis.

Having mentioned earlier that physical conditions can become a hindrance to the development of our mental internal conditions, on the other side of that, acquiring the internal conditions for our mental well-

being can only contribute to our physical well-being and not hinder it. When we apply the technique properly it will contribute substantially to that. And also when we acquire the appropriate internal conditions for our mental well-being it is only possible for our mental happiness to increase, it will not decrease. There is in no way that applying the appropriate and correct methods will cause one mental anguish and unhappiness; it can only increase our mental happiness.

So while mental happiness is gained by applying the appropriate techniques for developing the internal conditions for happiness, it also has a positive effect on our physical well-being. This is explained quite extensively in the text, where it is explained that because our mind and body are interrelated when there's mental happiness and mental joyfulness, it actually brings about physical well-being. When the mind is in a joyful and happy state that actually allows the elements within our body to be in harmony and thus cause physical well-being. In contrast to that, if the mind is disturbed and in angst and unhappy, then that can cause a lot of the physical elements and disturbance within our body which we will actually experience as illness or aches and pains.

There are situations we might notice that sometimes because of the mental angst we have it becomes hard for us to breathe, we find that just breathing becomes a labour. That's when we have these high and long sighs, as if we are carrying a really heavy load upon ourselves and our body feels tight within, and that can be the onset for bringing about physical ailments. Therefore, an unhappy state of mind and a worrisome state of angst in our mind can hinder our physical well-being. Whereas having a happy, joyful state of mind actually contributes to our physical well-being.

Modern scientists and doctors are beginning to acknowledge that having positive attitudes and a calm state of mind actually helps to promote good physical health and well-being. That is something

acknowledged and they have even done investigations and found it to be true. And there are those who have confided to me that meditation is the best medicine for their mind, that when they apply the meditation technique it makes them feel very joyful and happy in their mind. Whereas if they fail to practise, and miss out on meditation, eventually the mind becomes a little grumpy, very weighed down and unhappy. They have acknowledged that within themselves, whereas sometimes in the past I would have had to remind people that meditation is a good practice to do to contribute to one's happiness and well-being. Now with some of my earlier students, instead of me having to remind them, they actually tell me of its benefits, as if to remind myself to do meditation.

To make the point, meditation is really the best medicine for the mind to be happy. So of course they are experiencing that, and mentioning that from their own experiences which in fact is very true.

The main point that I have been emphasising is that when we recognise the value and benefits of the meditation technique, and really understand the value of a regular practice, then it is worthwhile that we take a keen interest and try to apply meditation in our daily life, then that is where we can get the benefit on a personal level.

And also, I forgot to mention, that others may be able to assist us when we are suffering physically with illness or disease. Others may be able to provide us care, medicine and take us to the hospital. In terms of physical ailments, to a certain degree others can assist and help us, but when it comes to our mental anguish, mental problems, that is something which others really don't have much clue of how to help us, and in fact others can't really help us. We need to deal with it ourselves, we need to be able to take control and take the personal responsibility for overcoming mental anguish and mental sufferings. We do have that potential, as we mentioned previously, and the technique is the meditation technique, if we apply it, it helps to overcome our mental

anguish. So to that extent we need to take meditation practice seriously in our life.

For those who might be quite new to this, this event is organised by a small group who have regular gatherings where they do meditation and other practices. These are individuals who have had experience, and have had many years of familiarity with the practice of meditation. Initially to go to a group regularly will help you to have the right conditions to meditate, that would be really helpful and useful, for those who are interested you can get information and go to the group. So again before we conclude for the evening if you have any questions we might take some questions, you can raise your hand if you do have a question.

Question: What is a reasonable period to meditate each day?

Answer: To answer your question, first of all there is no kind of universal law that says this is how long one should meditate, to begin with, it comes down to an individual capacity and through one's own experience. So the experience that you could gauge, depending on your ability to focus on an object, finding out for oneself how long you are able to maintain a good focus without too much distraction, the duration maybe 3, 4 or 5 minutes, whatever the natural duration is for yourself. Try to maintain that for a certain period of time, and then slowly increase it making sure that you don't stress yourself to the point where you wear yourself out.

Be sensitive to your experience and know that if you go beyond this limit then you become quite weary and your mind becomes too agitated. Finding a really comfortable time and balance for oneself is the key. For those who actually lament that they don't have time for meditation, I challenge them and say, well do you have time in your week, do you miss your serial show or going to your movies, don't you make a point of always trying to keep that up? If you have time for other leisure activities

such as going to a movie or seeing some show, then to rationalise that one does not have time would really be more like an excuse. Of course, that is not to say that watching a certain show or movie does not have any benefit at all. If you can watch it with an unbiased mind, without it becoming a cause for a lot of angst or a negative state of mind to arise within yourself, then there might be some benefit.

But otherwise, one could generally consider time to see a show or movie as spending one's time on trivial matters. Whereas if you take the initiative, and if you see the benefit of meditation, then considering that is important in your life, and actually trying to put it as a priority in your life then you can definitely find the time.

My advice is that on a regular basis, because one has to go to work and so forth, one may adopt shorter periods of time during one's working days. But if one has a little vacation time then one could expand it for a bit longer duration of meditation, and try to become a little bit more familiar with the practice. For those who want to take meditation practice as a regular practice, who have an interest and want to apply that in their life, then it is good that one finds a manageable time, whatever time that may be, 5 or 10 minutes and apply it on a regular basis everyday so that one makes it into a routine.

Others again have alerted me to the fact that if they find time to do a five-minute meditation before going in to a regular job, because they have taken the meditation seriously and applied the meditation technique for five minutes, it does definitely have a long lasting effect throughout the day. It definitely has a good effect. You need to be realistic in one's time frame of family commitments and so forth and find some time which is really suitable for yourself, and try to apply that on a regular basis. When I say realistic, I find here unless one is an ordained monk like ourselves, others may have family commitments, and to engage in a practice of meditation while neglecting one's family and commitments would be unrealistic and not advisable.

To relate an example to illustrate this point, a while ago there was one of my students who really wanted to take his meditation practice seriously, he wanted to take two months' time off his work to do a meditation retreat and focus on meditating. At that time, he was not actually married but engaged with a partner. And the partner told him, 'if you decide to leave your job and go off and meditate for two months, then don't even consider that we will be able to stay together, getting married is out of the question'. When he approached me about the situation, I conveyed that your partner is right, your attitude is not really correct. The student was asking me for advice, for a solution in relation to a certain commitment that he had taken upon himself. The retreat was a commitment he was really keen on following up. So he was asking my opinion on how to do it if it was not advisable to go off to a remote area for two months, then what was the best way for him to fulfil the commitment.

My advice was that you have a good place, you both have a good home, so rather than going somewhere else for two months and having no connection or communication with your partner, do the retreat at home. If your partner will agree and would be happy with that, and you can tell your partner to lock the door when she goes out in case she has a suspicious mind. When you are at home and you are doing whatever you have allocated to yourself you can do your practice, your retreat commitments there. That advice was taken up and he was able to fulfil his commitment without having to disrupt their relationship. The partner was happy and he was happy and that really served the purpose.

My general advice to those who are in a committed relationship, and for those who are particularly interested in doing practices, is to really be careful and mindful not to do your meditation practice at the cost of straining the relationship with your partner, particularly when in an initial rush of excitement about your meditation practice. Although seeming like a great spiritual practice, it would be with a selfish

attitude, and I advise people against making decisions solely based on their own interests. It's saying this is my own interest regardless of what my partner thinks, regardless of what my companion thinks this is what I am going to do. To make decisions based solely on your own interest is something which would not turn out to be very good ultimately, even for yourself. I try to advise others to always take into consideration the opinions and interest particularly of the special companion close to them, their partner.

In fact, whatever practice one does it needs to contribute to the harmonious relationship with one's partner, that result can come when one acts and genuinely applies the practice. When one's mind genuinely becomes more relaxed, calmer, happier, more joyful and more considerate of the other that will naturally contribute to one's well-being and the other partner will definitely appreciate that. At this stage you would not need to plead for permission to meditate, your partner will readily support you and say, 'please meditate, please go and meditate because your meditation has a good effect on us'. Especially in a stressful time in a relationship they might say, 'better you go and do your practice of meditation'!

To summarise the main point, whatever the spiritual practice or meditation that one does it needs to be done in light of how it would contribute to others happiness and well-being as well.

With that intention in your mind, your practice is secured so it does not become a nuisance to others, whatever practice you do it is done in harmony with the needs of others, relating in a nice way to others in general, and to your partner specifically. So whatever one does it contributes to nice gestures, physically nice gestures and verbally pleasant speech and nice attitudes toward the other. This way it contributes to their well-being by your mere behaviour and conduct, your nice gestures promote a calm soothing feeling within others. In this way it really is very true, that for those who exhibit a sense

of joyfulness and a real genuine sense of concern for others they are appreciated wherever they go. Whether it is in a work environment or a family environment, whether you are associating with others in whatever environment, you naturally become someone who others like to be around, and that is because of that positive quality that you have developed within yourself. To that extent you need to ensure that is the case for your practices.

The contrary of exhibiting nice gestures is to exhibit foul gestures such as, to have scorn for others and have a really dark face when approaching others, and using foul language and harsh speech. This conduct is something which is really not appropriate in relation to others. But not only is it not appropriate in relation to others well-being, but in fact if we get into a habit of exhibiting foul gestures, physical and verbal and so forth, then it actually harms ourselves, so even for our own well-being it is really detrimental, and so we really need to try to develop good gestures and good behaviour. Ultimately when we secure our practice to bring about a genuinely calm, peaceful and happy state of mind, that contributes to our own well-being, as well as that of others, this becomes very important and essential for our own practice.

So unless we have another question it is time for concluding. Again I would like to thank everyone for paying such great attention to what I had to say. I'm not claiming that what I shared with you is useful or beneficial for you, I'm not too sure I can appraise that for myself but from your side you have definitely shown great interest, paid good attention and I appreciate that.

From my side, even though I cannot claim that I have any great knowledge or wisdom that I have shared with you, what I can actually confirm is that I try to share whatever I can with a good intention, with the best of intentions that can be of service and benefit for others. So that good intention is definitely something that I cultivate and always

maintain. Likewise, when you come with the best of intentions then that with a combination of a good intention from your side as well as a good intention from my side I feel this will definitely bring about some sort of a good result.

So for tomorrow morning's session what I intend to do is when we first come in is to spend a few minutes maybe in meditation again, and then after the meditation session I will explain a bit about how to implement some practices to develop patience in our life. Now of course we wouldn't have time to go into much detail with the short time that we have; however, there are certain points that might be useful, and we need to be reminded of the importance of patience, because in fact patience is really most essential, quite crucial to having meaningful lives. Of course the first step in developing patience is to recognise what patience is, to have a really clear understanding of what having patience means, and then having understood what patience is as a quality of mind, then to actually cultivate and develop that. So we conclude.

Day 2

It seems like all the best information about myself was presented (warm laughter). Of course, what was not mentioned was some of my faults (warm laughter). We all tend to have certain good qualities but at the same time we all personally may have certain faults. So of course when presenting information about someone it is fair to actually present both sides (warm laughter). So of course in my personal story, that you might be able to get later in a book form, will be the fact that I've also had fights with other kids when I was young.

But now is a great opportunity and I take great joy in gathering again to share. Keeping in mind that this gathering is with the sole purpose that we can share something which will help each other and will be of benefit for ourselves. That of course is the main purpose of our gathering.

As mentioned yesterday, such a gathering with an intention of benefiting each other is a great and valuable asset that we have as humans. We all carry a potential to be able to share whatever good qualities, whatever good fortune we have. This ability to share with others, a way to benefit others and engaging in this is something which I consider very, very precious. It is like a unique set of treasures that we humans have and is to be considered and regarded as a really precious asset. When we carry the intention of helping others then to that extent we will be able to assist and be of joy and benefit to others and this is something that is really wondrous. However, this ability to be able to share joy and happiness particularly to help benefit others to also feel a sense of joy and happiness is dependent on having positive attitudes within one's mind.

The main source of all the good qualities and benefits that come about from individuals relies upon those good intentions and good attitudes within one's mind. So this is the main point that we need to try to work towards really cultivating those positive attitudes within our minds.

As I regularly emphasise in my talks, one thing we need to consider is that what sums us up as an individual is our body and mind. What we refer to as 'me' or 'I' as an individual person or being, what we are is inseparable from what is called a body and a mind. If you consider the individual as the one who possesses, the most valuable possession of that being is the body and the mind. Wherever the individual goes, the body and the mind travel together so it is worthwhile that the mind that goes along with us is a kind, considerate and joyful mind. Some of those good qualities to be cultivated within one's mind are compassion, love and a genuine concern for others. So when such positive attitudes are secured within the mind and because the mind travels wherever we go, these positive qualities such as compassion, love and genuine concern for others, the wish to benefit others will be the unfailing treasure that allows us to benefit others and also in

relation to ourselves, when those good qualities are secured within one's mind, one will in turn inevitably experience a great sense of well-being and joy for oneself too.

As mentioned previously, we all have the potential to cultivate the positive states of mind of compassion, love and genuine concern for others and when these states of mind are really developed it is appreciated by others. Naturally, without any specific effort from our own side, just by exhibiting those good qualities others will be drawn to oneself. Thus, wherever one goes one will not be deprived of companionship and good friends because those good qualities within one will naturally attract others. So therefore wherever one goes, whatever the occasion might be, there will be a sense of ease and well-being around oneself so to that extent it is really valuable. This is why I consider such positive attitudes as being the most valuable asset that one can develop.

I regularly emphasise that the importance of securing a genuine attitude of love and compassion towards others cannot be underestimated in any circumstances. It is the most valuable asset for oneself as well because if we were to lose a sense of love and compassion towards others, then as one's love and compassion towards others begins to diminish, naturally others start to keep their distance from us.

And that would then become the cause for us to actually start to lose friends and lose companionship. There are many who have actually confided in me and said they feel the pangs of loneliness and that they don't have any real companions in their life. People are slowly shying away and they fail to really understand what is causing the situation. They start blaming others for neglecting them and not being nice to them. In fact, if one were to truly analyse and check within oneself, one's own sense of love, compassion and good attitude towards others is beginning to wane and diminish. When that happens, failing to really acknowledge and accept this within oneself, one may start to

blame and think others are neglecting and abandoning oneself. But in fact, what's happening is that one's own precious positive attitudes are waning. This is something that we need to really detect.

This is the reason why I emphasise that there is an actual practical benefit for oneself in expressing a genuine loving and compassionate attitude towards others. It is so that one may be able to relate to the practical benefit and the personal benefit. Why should we motivate ourselves to develop these precious qualities of love and compassion? Because as ordinary beings, if love and compassion are presented as a sole attitude just to benefit others at the expense of oneself, neglecting one's own needs, then it might be hard for us to see the value. It is hard for us to really give up our own interests entirely. As ordinary people we are instinctively concerned for ourselves and we want to know what is in it for me? How do I benefit from this?

Since we do have the natural tendency to think about our own interests, it is worthwhile to consider why love and compassion are not solely for the benefit of others, which comes at the expense and neglect of ourselves, but rather are actually a benefit for us too. As it is explained in the Buddhist teachings, when you have a genuine concern for others you dedicate yourself to others' well-being and your own well-being will be naturally developed anyway. If it was presented as a means only to benefit others and if we misinterpret and misunderstand that and think, there's nothing in it for me then we might be discouraged. You might think well I'm not really sure about developing love and compassion if there's nothing in it for me. I'm encouraging you to really see that there is benefit for oneself. It brings that sense of love, compassion and a sense of joy within oneself. That is something I can attest to with my own experience. Normally I have to say that I have not that much to share, I don't have great wisdom or great knowledge or any great realisations to share with you. I cannot boast about that, but one thing which I normally do boast about is that I have some experience of the value of maintaining a sense of joy and happiness and

a sense of love and compassion within one's heart. That is something of a great value from my own experience and my own life, and that is something that I normally do claim because it is my experience.

For example there was one time when an Indian lady came up to me and said, 'You seem to be very joyous and happy all the time; every time I see you, you actually seem to be really joyful and happy. So what do you attribute that too? How do you gain that?' And so as a response to that, to a query about what makes me joyful and happy, my immediate response was, 'Well, I've lost everything in my life: my country, whatever belongings I would have had in the past and in Tibet. I've just left everything behind completely and come in as a refugee without any belongings as such. So that is a reason for me being happy'. She was taken aback at first, and couldn't relate to that. Then she partly seemed to get the point I was making and from her own side she said, 'So what you actually mean is that, even in spite of having lost everything, the reason you remain happy is because you don't have any attachment to those things. Right?'

To summarise the main value of securing a positive attitude within oneself as mentioned in our session yesterday extensively, in ultimate relation to my own experience in my life regardless of external situations, regardless of what's going on around me, I am happy. Even in the face of hardships and difficulties I can maintain a positive attitude. The positive qualities mentioned earlier and a sense of joy and happiness is within my mind.

I recommend not allowing those external conditions to be daunting, accept the situation and willingly have endurance. In spite of difficulties, have the confidence to maintain a sense of genuine concern for the well-being of others. These qualities actually help to maintain a calm mind. It's to our advantage to preserve and really secure those positive qualities within our minds. If we don't, what happens is that even with the slightest of difficulties, even when something slightly goes wrong,

it becomes a big issue, and it brings a lot of turmoil and unhappiness to one's mind. Really, whether an external condition disturbs one's mind or not depends entirely on one's own attitude, maintaining a positive attitude in one's mind and not disturbing oneself.

As explained quite extensively in our session yesterday there is a technique, a way we can actually secure the positive qualities within the mind. We can secure those we already have and actually increase the positive qualities within our minds further, as well as maintain and be able to induce a calm, bright and clear state of mind and also a focused mind. They call the technique meditation, so as presented yesterday and again in this morning's session we can adopt this meditation practice for a short time.

Many others have confided in me that the meditation practice has been of immense benefit for them in their lives. That in fact they regret they had not been able to come across a meditation technique earlier in their lives. These were individuals who had reached their eighties, and their lives after they had met the techniques of meditation became entirely different. Their lives became much gentler, much calmer. The meditation techniques that they were referring to are those of generating and cultivating the sense of love and compassion within one's heart and extending that to others. So they have said that their lives have definitely changed, become much better and they regret that they had not met that technique earlier in their life.

When His Holiness the Dalai Lama was visiting Australia, and specifically in Brisbane, we attended a conference called the Happiness Conference. His Holiness the Dalai Lama was invited there and one of the speakers was a famous psychologist, Paul Ekman, the author of 'The Art of Happiness'. There was a teleconference happening and there were about 20 minutes of discussion between him and the Dalai Lama. Sharing his views at one point, he mentioned that it had been eleven years since he met the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala and that in

those eleven years his life had changed dramatically, he had become much happier and content and his life had really changed for the better.

Then he also mentioned that his daughter was attending the conference. The Dalai Lama said at that point, 'Oh where is she, where is she?' She actually came up and apparently she was also a psychologist, a scientist, and she happened to be a Buddhist as well. So the Dalai Lama greeted her as well. The main point is that Paul Ekman was really sharing his deep feelings about how he had this dramatic transformation take place because of having met the Dalai Lama and putting into practise these devices.

We need to relate these experiences of others to ourselves by hearing their stories. We must then remind ourselves that we are actually the same as the others who had these experiences and benefited from the practices of meditation and so forth. We are also human beings with exactly the same potential, exactly the same state of mind.

Though we all have our individual minds they work in the same way and they have the same potential for great progress, for great inner clarity and great qualities. Now that is not to ignore that our minds may well have some faults presently; that is also a fact and reality. However, with familiarity and with diligence and progression we can definitely overcome whatever faults that we may have now and the mind can truly develop into a pure compassionate mind. That is familiarising our minds with the positive attitudes with the practice of meditation. That is what we need to remind ourselves.

So for the practice of meditation as mentioned previously, one of the conditions is to have an upright but relaxed body. When we actually straighten up our body and sit in an upright position, it allows the channels within our bodies to be straightened out which also helps the wind element within our bodies to flow. The energy or the subtle energies within our bodies flow so that allows the mind to be fresh and

thus it is very conducive for meditation and it helps to remove what is called 'fogginess' and 'dullness' in one's mind.

So again, some specific points about meditation posture. Some of you may have already heard from the recent teachings of the Dalai Lama to straighten out one's body posture first and then to have the head slightly bent forward, which aligns the spine with the head. Best not to have the eyes completely shut but not to have them wide open either, just slightly open so as to gently allow some visibility of light. Having found the appropriate physical posture for one's meditation, then we also need to ensure that our minds are free from distractions and in a clear, bright state.

Furthermore, to really apply the correct technique of meditation, focusing on an object, we need to commit ourselves to not allowing our minds to be influenced by any form of distraction. This includes thoughts and ideas that come to mind. Temporarily, we completely withdraw our minds from all forms of distraction and just bring our minds within ourselves. Having brought our focus and attention within that will first of all centre our minds.

Then after a few moments of feeling centred within ourselves we apply our attention and focus on our chosen object. We use the breath as the focus. It is based on our normal breathing. We need the actual process to be free from laboured breathing and from audible sound when we are breathing. It has to be very natural, unforced breathing in and out preferably through our nostrils at a natural pace. The even regulation of the very gentle natural breath helps us to again focus and anchor attention on the breath itself. And so in this way, by keeping our entire focus on the breath itself, we will spend the next few minutes just doing that practice. (Pause for meditation)

As we would have all experienced from our short meditation, as far as the meditation technique goes, it is not really complex at all. It's quite

simple, there's no complexity about the meditation technique. It is a matter of keeping one's attention and focus on the chosen object, and whatever object we choose to focus on needs to be an object which does not cause delusions to arise in one's mind such as negative states of mind: anger, attachment and so forth. Initially we choose a neutral object such as the breath. When we start to develop an accurate focus on the breath itself and are able to keep our attention span for a certain period of time then we can change the objects to more virtuous ones. There are many positive objects that we can focus on to develop the qualities within our minds. So that can be adapted to our meditation technique later on in our practice as we progress.

In relation to the object, it needs to be an object which does not cause delusions or disturbance to arise in the mind. In the event we choose an actual physical object other than the breath, then we need to keep in mind, as presented in our tradition, that it is not the actual physical object that we will be focusing on, such as a drawing or image of the Buddha, but rather a mental image. We first familiarise ourselves with the aspects, the features, the different characteristics of the object. Once we have familiarised by looking at it, we get a clear mental image of that in our minds and then that is what we focus on in our practice of meditation. Another point that it might be useful to take note of as we progress in meditation and which is in line with our tradition is that the meditation object needs to be an internal object.

If one does not understand what that entails, then one might misunderstand it. If you are focusing on an external object, how can that be an internal object? How could you internalise an object which is something physical and out there? So to understand the point about the meditation object being an internal object we can take for example, a cup. As mentioned earlier, we first familiarise ourselves with the actual features of the cup such as the shape, the colour and so forth, and then once we have looked at it and we have seen the characteristics of the cup and are familiar with it by focusing on it visually, then as we

close our eyes we can bring that image into our mind. So it is that image of the cup that we would have in our mind that is the 'object' to focus on in our meditation. That is how it becomes an internal object, because it is a mental object which we are now focusing on.

At this point it may be worthwhile to really get a condensed understanding of what the whole purpose of Buddhist Dharma practice actually entails. What does it mean to practise Dharma? What is the purpose of practising Dharma and meditation? What is the Dharma? What is the purpose and how do we practise? The great masters have summarised the Dharma as living to benefit others and not to harm others. Indeed, when we look at any practice from the Buddhist Teachings we can see that each and every practice in Buddhism is presented as a course for doing exactly that; how to actually benefit others and at the very minimum, not to hurt others.

The great masters have summarised and condensed the whole teachings of the Buddha into these two lines. These condensed teachings we can all immediately relate to; we don't wish to be harmed by anyone and if there's anyone who can benefit us, then that would be greatly appreciated. We would naturally appreciate anyone who would benefit or help us and we don't appreciate any harm inflicted upon ourselves. So just as it is true for oneself, when we look into the situation of each and every other being, human or other living being, it is exactly the same case. There is no-one who wants to voluntarily experience harm and there's no-one, not even one living being, who would not appreciate benefit towards them.

Now if we, as a human race, were to actually put this into practice, if each individual human being were to commit themselves to not harming others and instead to actually benefiting others, just imagine how much great harmony and joy and well-being there would be in the world. There would be no conflicts whatsoever and that naturally would contribute to joy and happiness. When there are no people

harming each other, only benefiting each other, there's no room for any discomfort, any sort of violence and so forth.

It might be a wishful thought to imagine the whole world actually engaged in that sort of practice. To practise benefiting each other and not harming each other might be too vast a goal and in practical ways it might not be possible for one person to make that happen. However, on an individual basis, what if one person were to ask how we could actually practise that, to ask if I were to practise that, even if I may not be able to practise with all beings, all the human race, all cultural beings, who is it that I can actually practise this with then?

If one were to wonder where do I begin to practise? The answer in a practical way is with the very individuals that you live with. Thus, for those in a committed relationship, with a partner, it is with your partner that you start to practise, committing yourself to a genuine sense of wishing to benefit them and to not intentionally harm or hurt them. Then it becomes a very meaningful relationship and indeed it would definitely align with the marriage vows that you take. You have similar vows in the Western Tradition to the Tibetan Tradition to the effect that in good times and bad times we will stay together. So in fact this sort of vow itself is actually really quite a meaningful vow, in good times and in bad times meaning that regardless of the situation you'll stick together and help each other. If one were to actually practise this, it would be really meaningful.

To engage in the practice, as mentioned earlier about how to extend one's practice of benefiting others and not harming others, it is indeed with those that one actually associates with that one should start. Start with those you live with and then extend that to others around you; then it becomes a really practical way to contribute to harmonious relationships. When you sincerely care for and wish to be of benefit to another, showing a genuine sense of concern, and when they realise that you do not have any intention to harm them in any way, that would be

considered very valuable. You would gain the ultimate trust from them and it would be really appreciated. So therefore, when that is expressed mutually there is no question about having a good relationship. Thus it is very important that we really take this to heart and practise it in our daily lives with the very individuals that we live with.

How do we go about maintaining that noble attitude of wishing to benefit another and not doing harm? One's partner for example, those that we live with, how do we actually maintain that practice on a continuous basis? The answer to that is we need to develop a certain quality which is called patience. If we develop patience, then we will be able to maintain that noble practice of benefiting and not harming others. Why and how is that so? If we lack patience, then when we feel harm extended upon ourselves, we immediately retaliate causing similar hurt. We do that because we are not able to tolerate it, we are not able to be patient with that hurt inflicted upon ourselves. So if we find that we immediately retaliate when we hear something hurtful or something hurtful is done to us and we immediately retaliate with harmful words and or actions, we lack patience. As a consequence, we harm the other and we do not practise benefiting and not harming the other. When the other harms us then we have retaliated and harmed the other as well. So therefore, we have failed to practise patience.

The reason why we do harm to others is because we lack patience and the reason we lack patience is we haven't yet developed a genuine concern, a genuine love and compassion for the other. So when we feel that we are hurt we immediately respond in wanting to hurt them because we don't have compassion for them. We need to understand that developing a genuine sense of love and compassion is most crucial to develop patience.

What is patience? The Buddhist Teachings define patience as a state of mind which does not become disturbed in the event of any kind of harm. When we relate to the definition of patience, we can

definitely see how we can practise it. Now in relation to that definition of patience we can see that when we do retaliate it is because of a lack of that state of mind of non-disturbance.

When someone says something which is hurtful the reason we retaliate is because our mind is disturbed. If our mind becomes disturbed, affected by that, then we retaliate. What we feel when someone says something hurtful is I cannot bear that they have said something like that, I just cannot bear it, it is just not right. The mind cannot tolerate it and becomes disturbed, so then, that disturbed mind is what initiates us to say something hurtful back, to retaliate, to inflict some harm on the other as well. So here, imagine the mind not becoming disturbed. If the mind were not disturbed, when someone says something, regardless of what they've said, or done, then the wish to retaliate, the wish to do something hurtful in return, would not occur. Because the mind is not disturbed, one is not affected by that. So therefore we can see here that the virtue of patience is that the mind is not disturbed and we will not retaliate with harmful actions.

So is that clear enough? (No comments). So that is clear, that's good, it would be good to use that! (Lots of laughter).

To understand how the sequence of events takes place on a mental level, in relation to not being patient and retaliating because of not being patient, let's take the example that someone says something which is hurtful. You hear it and the first experience you may have is that it actually disturbs you, you feel uncomfortable, and you get affected by it. Now the next thing after feeling disturbed and feeling uncomfortable is that you start becoming agitated, then agitation causes anger, and then it is when anger arises in the mind that the wish to retaliate develops - the wish to harm, because the nature of anger is the wish to harm another. So therefore that harm we intend to cause another comes as an after effect of the mind being disturbed by what they have said.

In fact, it really isn't whether we allow our mind to become disturbed or not, which is the main thing, although this is the main cause if we take the subsequent action of retaliating or not. The main thing to address is the fact that it is not really dependent upon what is being said by the other but how we interpret it.

If for example, as a parent you have a small child, there may be an instance when they say something which is really absurd and which really might be something ridiculous, calling you a name or whatever. But as a parent, knowing that the child is really very immature and really doesn't know right from wrong yet, one might not take it seriously at all. Why? Because it is a child and we know that they don't know any better and so we don't get affected. So in other words, if a child says the same thing that someone else might say it doesn't affect us because we don't take it seriously, and thus it doesn't disturb the mind. Because the mind is not disturbed by what the child says it doesn't affect the mind, we don't get agitated and thus we don't get angry and therefore we don't retaliate. We'll not suddenly scold and beat up a child just because it has said something which is inappropriate, we will not take it that seriously.

So therefore, it needs to be understood how that sequence of events takes place on the mental level. If we don't allow things that others say and so forth to disturb the mind, then anger does not arise. Another important point in regard to relationships is that in a relationship we cannot expect one's partner will always be nice and say pleasant words. It is inevitable that there will be times that they will be disturbed or unhappy and as a consequence of which they may say things which seem inappropriate. It is at times such as these that, if we don't practise patience, we might become angry and retaliate. So that is the reason why the practice of patience is emphasised and is needed. There are times we really need to practise that in terms of relationships.

We must understand that in events such as when someone says something inappropriate, or does something inappropriate, it is that mental state of not being disturbed which is called patience. We need to get a really clear understanding of what patience is and not misinterpret what patience entails. Now if someone was to say something or do something and we actually get very upset and angry but we don't retaliate in the moment although inside anger is really rising, then someone from a distance or from outside may think, 'oh, they're not retaliating, they must be great, they must be very patient because they're not saying anything in return or doing anything in return'. In fact, inside we are boiling with anger and so therefore it is just because of the situation we are in that we do not retaliate. We may not be able to retaliate immediately but still be harbouring thoughts of revenge for the future so that is not patience at all. Just not retaliating verbally or physically in itself is not necessarily patience; not being disturbed in one's mind is what is actually called real patience.

In relation to this, if someone of similar power or more powerful than us says or does something to us we might not be able to retaliate immediately, however we still get angry and in our mind we really harbour those ill feelings, hateful feelings in our mind. Whereas when someone of equal status or someone lower than us says something inappropriate we might immediately retaliate and scold them. This goes to show that in the earlier instance we didn't retaliate not because we were practising patience but just because we dared not say anything, we dared not do anything but still we were affected. In the case of someone who is from a lower standard than you that you feel you can bully when they say something to you, you immediately retaliate and shut them up.

That is why it is mentioned in the Buddhist Teachings that to practise patience with someone of equal standard or someone lower than you is a much more virtuous deed because you have the ability to retaliate but in fact you don't. You actually remain patient and don't allow your

mind to become disturbed and that event of patience is really virtuous.

Now, it might be worthwhile to mention that, at this point, we might all see the practicality and the great necessity of practising patience. We might all agree, 'Yes, patience is a virtue, it is indeed a great, great thing, a great quality; I would definitely like to develop patience'. But we might then question ourselves: 'I'm not sure if I'm ready yet and I don't know if I can avoid allowing my mind to be disturbed when others criticise or ridicule me and so forth. How can I ever actually gain that ability?'

If we set ourselves up for failure and think we cannot do that, then indeed we may not be able to develop that quality readily, right away. However, what we need to remind ourselves of is that even though in reality we may not have developed ourselves to be able to not feel any hurt or any pain when someone says something hurtful or ridiculous and so forth, it is still something that we can aspire to achieve.

One can set a goal for oneself, something that one definitely looks forward to and wants to work towards, of developing a state of mind where one doesn't feel disturbed when others criticise or ridicule them, so that one doesn't become angry and direct harm towards others who harm them. If we leave that set up as a goal for ourselves and practise towards that, it is something that we will definitely be able to cultivate and develop. Why? Because as the Great Masters, the Buddhist Masters and the Buddha himself have mentioned one of the qualities of the mind is that it is possible to actually develop whatever you familiarise it with. So if you familiarise yourself with patience, you can definitely develop patience. It is one of the ultimate qualities of the mind that with familiarity everything can be achieved and obtained.

So with that sort of far-sighted goal that we set up for ourselves, we try to practise slowly and gradually and in small ways. We try to do whatever we can, reminding ourselves again and again of the virtue of

patience. Also, as was mentioned earlier, when we recognise the virtue of patience, by the same token we need to understand the ill effects; the disadvantages of anger which is the opposite of patience. So that is something we need to clearly understand and accept as well.

We need to acknowledge and understand that the opposite state of mind which hinders patience and obstructs its development is anger. Thus we also need to understand the nature of anger: what does anger mean? According to the Buddhist Teachings, anger is defined by focusing on three different types of objects, the intent to harm any of these objects is anger.

The first object is other living beings, other beings who may cause us harm. The second is the sufferings we experience within ourselves. Sometimes, as a result of hardships or difficulties or maybe some weaknesses within ourselves, we can become very angry and upset because of our own failings or sufferings. That is the second object, oneself. The third object is inanimate objects. We have all maybe had times when we were upset with a thorn that stuck in our foot or some object that stopped working and I think we can all relate to computers not working (much laughter). So these are three types of objects that we may experience harm from: either from other sentient beings or from one's own sufferings or inanimate objects which become a condition for us to experience some sort of harm. So in relation to these three objects, in the event we experience harm from them, the intent to retaliate and wishing them harm is called anger.

Now the Classical Teachings of Buddhism present three categories of patience. The first is patience in the event of harm from other beings; not allowing one's mind to be disturbed in the event of harms from other beings is one type of patience. And then in the event of difficulties and sufferings experienced within oneself, not allowing one's mind to be disturbed is the second type of patience. And the third type of patience is the patience of thinking about the Dharma.

What this entails is, when considering our own situations, we think about the qualities of the Buddha and his Teachings and the special community, the Sangha. By thinking about their qualities then one can be encouraged to develop patience and not allow one's mind to be disturbed or we can further contemplate the impermanent nature, the transient nature of things as explained in the Buddhist Teachings, or selflessness or emptiness.

Contemplating various different points presented in the teachings or in the Dharma encourages one not to become disturbed, encourages our minds to not become disturbed, thus practising patience in relation to that. These are the three different categories of patience.

With reference to practising patience or developing patience in relation to the first category, in the event that others harm one, the antidotes are explained in the Teachings. One emphasised technique is to contemplate before we allow ourselves to get affected, disturbed and angry; to really analyse whether the other is harming us out of their own control or uncontrollably. The reason to retaliate and harm others is because we think they have control, so analyse whether they have control of the reason they harm us or are uncontrolled. And then a further category, a further presentation in other Teachings is to meditate on compassion, developing compassion towards them. However, on our level analysing whether they have control over what they do or not is something that can have a very great effect.

How do we analyse whether someone is harming us out of their own control or uncontrollably? In one particular text presenting the classical Teachings of Mind Training in Buddhism it mentions that when someone harms us, for example if someone hits us with a stick, it is because of the pain we experience, the harm that we experience that we might get angry and upset. But rather than giving in to immediately allowing ourselves to become angry and retaliate we can ask first of all how did I experience that harm, what actually initiated that harm?

Then if we were to initially regard it rationally and think about it, if we were to get upset and angry with that which actually caused the physical pain, then it would be the stick. We wouldn't be angry with the person because it would actually be the stick which hit us, which came into contact with our body and we felt the pain. So rightly, if we were to think 'I'm angry because I felt the pain and that's what caused me the pain', we would have to comply with the fact that it was the stick that actually hurt us.

But then of course we will go further, we will reason that the stick in itself couldn't have hurt us if the person wasn't holding the stick, so therefore it is actually still the person we are getting upset with because the stick in itself wouldn't harm us, it was the person who was holding the stick who harmed us, who hit us with the stick. Then we feel justified in getting upset and angry with the person. However, with the same logic if we were to go further, what is it in the person that would cause that person to hit one with the stick, is it from their own choice or are they not in control? Then we can further analyse and reason and say if the person was not harbouring ill feelings and anger then the person would not have picked up the stick and hurt us. So it is not the person's fault really, but actually anger within the person which is not the person; 'anger' is distinct from the person. We might even say that anger is caused by the delusions in the person's mind, an affliction, ignorance within the mind.

So thus the particular affliction within them which causes the anger is called an affliction of grasping to the self. Because of that person having a strong sense of grasping to their own needs, own interests and so forth, they immediately feel upset by anything that harms their interests and feel that they need to harm anything which opposes their interests. It is this affliction within them which causes them, the person, to become angry and thus initiates the picking up of the stick and leads them to come at us and actually charge and hit us.

In fact, when we are looking for the real cause of what is harming us it is actually the affliction within them and so therefore when we come to that point, we can actually start to feel sorry for that person. The wrong they do us is not out of their right state of mind; it is because they are completely controlled by the afflictions within their mind that they harm us. So then they become an object of compassion rather than an object of anger. We can also further use that reflection to begin looking at whether we have similar afflictions within ourselves or not and that is one's real target. One needs to get rid of those afflictions rather than getting upset and angry with someone else.

So in relation to developing the patience that does not allow one's mind to become disturbed in the event of harm from others, the way to develop and cultivate that patience (in a brief way because we don't have enough time to go into detail), the technique is this way of really analysing. Rather than resorting to our normal impulse, our normal instinct of immediately getting upset and angry and justifying ourselves for doing so, analysing is to take a step back and ask what actually caused that harm?

Then, as mentioned earlier, try to detect the real cause of the harm that one experiences seemingly from the other person. In fact, the other person is really a victim of their own afflictions. They are a victim of their afflictions because it is out of their control when they do things that harm others. Whether it is physical harm, verbal harm or psychological harm, whatever harm that they may be inflicting it is not because of their right state of mind, they're out of control and they're victims of their own afflictions.

The way to really understand this is by relating it to one's own experience. When one is really upset and angry, what kind of things does one find oneself doing? What kind of things does one find oneself saying and doing to others? Even, especially, to those we love; those that we actually start to abuse or criticise that we normally consider

our loved and dear ones. Later, when we feel in our right state of mind, we feel we have said and done certain things which are really totally unacceptable. We find that at that time when we said those things, when we did those things, we didn't have any control. We were completely dominated by our own negative states of mind, by anger, and that is what compelled us to say things and do things that we might regret, that we don't feel happy about later. We were affected by strong afflictions in our mind such as anger and likewise. The afflictions in our mind that we were uncontrollably under the influence of, led us to say things and do things or to think in a certain way which was inappropriate, which we later understand fully was inappropriate. But at the time we didn't have control.

At that time when we were the victim, when we were unhappy with our situation, we would want others to have some understanding. We would wish at the very least that they leave us alone. If we say something inappropriate we kind of beg for understanding because we are not in our right state of mind, don't we? So if that is true for ourselves wouldn't that be true for the one who is now hurting us? It is because they don't have control of their own self that they are saying things or doing things which are inappropriate. Have compassion for them. We wish others would have understanding for us, compassion for us, when we are not in our right state of mind. Give us a break, we say - so give others a break too. That is how we need to analyse in a practical way, thus developing a real sense of understanding and compassion for others based on our own experience. That is the best way really.

For those of us who are inclined to develop compassion, this is an event, a time when we can feel real compassion for another. Why? Because if they are intending to harm us, or anyone else, it is because they're disturbed, their mind is disturbed. It's a clear sign that they're unhappy: and what does compassion mean? Again, the definition of compassion, according to the Buddhist Teachings, is the genuine wish for others to

be free from suffering. So here in this event when someone is harming you as an example, it is really a time to have compassion for them because they are really suffering, their mind is unhappy.

Again, in relating this to oneself, when we are joyful and happy does it occur to us at all to wish to harm someone? That's the last thing we would think about. There's no room for the thought of harming someone when you're feeling joyful and happy. So the only time that any intent or wish to harm someone occurs is when one is not happy oneself. So understand the other person is really in an unhappy state of mind and that is what is causing the disturbance in their mind that leads them to say things and do things in a certain way. So thus it is really appropriate to feel compassion.

Again, there isn't time to expand too much but to recap the main point here as the great Indian Master Shantideva has mentioned in his work, 'The Bodhisattva's Way of Life', when someone is affected by anger they even take the great measure of harming themselves, hurting themselves to the extent of even taking their own life. So when others are afflicted in such a way that they would even harm themselves and take their own life because they're affected by anger, isn't it an appropriate time for us to feel real compassion for them rather than getting upset and angry ourselves? That is the object of real compassion. If that is not an object of compassion, where else can we find an object of compassion? So it is with this reasoning that Shantideva encouraged us, in the event of others harming us out of afflictions of anger and so forth, to feel real compassion rather than retaliating.

And then, when we think about the disadvantages of anger, there are so many examples we could use. In recent times I've heard of the situation where a husband, because he had an argument with his wife, out of great anger and frustration killed their own child in order to retaliate. Imagine when he came to his senses! How much regret, how much shock he would have experienced in finding out what he had done in his rage.

Another event was when a husband killed his own wife and when he was found out he was charged with manslaughter and was imprisoned. They had a young child. Now the mother's dead, the father's imprisoned, who will take care of the child? When I encountered this story I was shocked and perplexed by the extent to which rage and anger can cause harm. And for me at that moment it really became a very strong impulse to feel overwhelming compassion for someone like this particular person and also others affected by such strong anger in their minds. Because such measures were taken how much suffering it will cause for the husband himself, and how much suffering it will cause for the children who are left without parents now to care for them.

So taking these examples, we can definitely see this all comes about because of anger, these are the ill effects and disadvantages of anger. Of course these are extreme cases but they do stem from anger and if one has a seed of anger there's no way to tell that it won't lead to such drastic measures for oneself as well. So when we see these examples rather than seeing them as something objective and thinking, that doesn't concern me, that's really terrible, that's bad but it doesn't affect me in any way, one must use those examples as a way to detect the anger within oneself and then one is further encouraged to fully acknowledge and understand that as long as we harbour anger the seeds of anger within ourselves there's only going to be disadvantages and ill effects for ourselves and others.

So we need to resolve to commit ourselves to practise patience which is an antidote for anger. If we don't like anger within ourselves we need to practise patience because there's no way to overcome anger except by developing genuine patience, the mind of patience within oneself. If we can start to really think about the ill effects and disadvantages of anger and relate them to ourselves the more encouraged we will become to develop genuine patience, the practice of patience within oneself. So it is this way that we adopt the practice.

Now, just to touch on the second level of patience which is, namely, the Patience of Willingly Accepting Sufferings. This is, in the event of sufferings in relation to oneself, rather than allowing one's mind to become disturbed willingly accepting those sufferings or enduring those sufferings. That level of patience relates to problems and difficulties that we would normally encounter in our lives. If one doesn't develop this particular patience of willingly accepting the hardships and difficulties in one's life, then as mentioned previously, with the slightest mishap they will be completely derailed and feel they cannot cope with their life, they cannot cope with their work. Whatever the situation may be they allow themselves to become completely overwhelmed and give up. They lose the self-confidence to go on with life. So therefore this particular patience in relation to oneself, one's own problems is essential.

As His Holiness the Dalai Lama himself mentions the patience of willingly accepting difficulties is the best way to overcome difficulties. That is very true because by willingly accepting difficulties rather than trying to avoid them or becoming really upset by them and not tolerating them, it becomes less of a problem than if we add on our mental anguish and become upset and angry. That just exacerbates our problem, it just becomes worse rather than being solved. It is better if we accept and face the difficulties and troubles and say okay, this is a situation where there are some difficulties but I'll not let myself become daunted, I'll face it and I'll try to work with the situation. With that sort of acceptance of the problem or difficulty you're facing you would be able to maintain a clear mind and thus be able to see things objectively and be able to find good solutions to overcome the problem.

So when we think about it in this way, when the Dalai Lama says that willingly accepting the difficulties becomes the best solution, the best method to overcome difficulties, it is a really practical approach. Whereas if we get upset and agitated and in the worst case experience

rage then we might take measures which are extreme and which make the problems even worse. Practically speaking, in our lives we will have many problems, we will be faced with hardships and so forth, so rather than allowing them to disturb us and becoming daunted by them, if we can really accept them, this becomes one of the best methods for one to progress. Furthermore, as his Holiness the Dalai Lama shared with us the best lessons he's learned in life have come from when he has faced the most difficult situations in life. So that's what he mentions, and he's sharing a great insight with us to adopt in our own lives too.

In relation to dealing with problems and difficulties as a great Indian Master, Shantideva shares in his work, 'if there's a remedy to a problem or difficulty, why worry? In the event that there is no remedy for a problem, again why worry?'

His Holiness the Dalai Lama emphasised this point recently in his teaching. An example is the event of a problem such as sickness, if we are diagnosed with a sudden illness. Now if there is a remedy to cure that illness you know there is no need for us to worry about it because there is a cure. The advice here is that if there is a remedy then endeavour to find that method and apply that remedy so that one can overcome the illness. Rather than worrying try to get rid of that problem by applying the remedy. In the event there is no remedy, worrying about it and being really uncomfortable, overwhelmed and unhappy just causes more mental anguish that is not going to solve any problem and so how can it help? Worrying cannot help the situation, cannot help in any way, so therefore in the event there is no solution we just have to accept the reality of the situation in the present moment. Thus it is in this way that this advice can really help us to cope with situations in our minds.

Before we conclude, I'd like to thank the organisers for really organising the event so well. They have done a great job in organising

the venue, likewise all the facilities and that's really great. I really appreciate that. And then most importantly, for those who have come to the talks, I really appreciate your keen interest and your eagerness to learn about some of the techniques presented in Buddha's Teachings. As mentioned previously, if one does find these practical and of benefit in one's life then it is a matter of applying them in one's life. As I encouraged earlier apply some of the meditation techniques in your daily life and try to think about these points that have been mentioned. Try to further analyse and think about them and use them in your daily life, so then in that way they will definitely be of some benefit for you in your life. I really encourage you to further go on.

In relation to the intent of the organisers, they invited me to come to say a few words with the intention that it may have been of benefit for others and so that is why they went to the extent of organising and providing a place for us to stay, organising the event venue here and so forth. They have no other motive than it could be of benefit for others, so I really admire their intentions. Likewise, from my side as mentioned earlier, I'm not claiming that what I've said has been a benefit for you. I'm not sure, that's for you to check up. But from my side I can definitely say that I've also had a good intention, I came with a good intention.

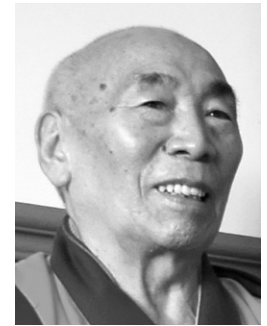
In relation to the intent of the organisers, part of what they went through is giving their own home and moving out themselves, giving their comfortable home for us to stay in (laughter). So that is, you know, a really noteworthy act from their side. Finally, for those who are able to stay you can share the good meal that people have brought. That will be a good way for us to end on a good note with a happy time together. It's just our time together that would be good.



Prayer Flags, looking S.E. towards Middle Island, Warrnambool

Why love and compassion are most essential in one's life

Day 1, 2012



I'm very happy to come to Warrnambool and meet many of you again. During our time together, it would be good if you can make sure that you are physically relaxed and that your mind is relaxed. I will ensure that I am physically and mentally relaxed as well. And when we adopt this on both sides, we can definitely achieve something meaningful. I believe being physically and mentally relaxed also helps having a feeling of warmth towards others. To acquire a relaxed body and mind is something we can do, it is within our capacity. There are many things we can do to contribute to one's own and others' well-being from this relaxed state. Along with the relaxed state of being it is important to have a clear, bright mind as this definitely contributes to having a happy mind. Personally I feel having a happy state of mind, in terms of conditions for our own well-being, is most essential. It sums up what we all want ultimately, to be happy and to not have any misery.

So, making sure that we have a happy mind is most essential. In terms of the various things to accomplish in life, the goals we set to achieve for ourselves are only achievable through physical well-being and mental well-being. Whatever goal we want to achieve is dependent on having physical and mental well-being. So as a basis, we need to ensure we

have physical well-being and to pay attention to having mental well-being. We need to pay attention to ensure this is the case and in terms of one's own well-being, to come to realise ensuring one's own physical and mental well-being, although we can rely on others, ultimately our own well-being is in our own hands and is our own responsibility. We can contribute to the well-being of others, but ultimately, everyone is responsible for their own well-being.

In terms of our physical well-being, we spend significant time and energy to take care of our physical well-being. Most of us have very busy lives with work and so forth, and when examining those activities we see the primary purpose is to take care of our physical well-being by getting food, clothing and shelter. We spend so much time and energy acquiring means for our physical welfare. As I have heard from others who have confided in me, they spend so much time and energy in obtaining good conditions for their physical well-being.

It is possible to acquire significant wealth from one's work related activities. Although having acquired much wealth, this does not guarantee inner fulfilment, and thus one may still have an empty feeling within. As a particular individual said to me 'I don't feel satisfaction and contentment within my mind'. Some of these people who have confided in me are millionaires with great wealth. When they confide that they don't feel satisfaction despite their wealth, this indicates that what is missing is the inner wealth of genuine happiness. When they come up to me, they say 'what should we do, how do we obtain the conditions for inner wealth, inner happiness?' When external things fail to bring happiness, it is the inner qualities that need to be developed as a source of inner happiness.

As much as we obtain external wealth we need also to develop the inner qualities, what I call 'inner wealth' in order to acquire mental happiness. This is something we need to understand, it is actually at this point where one is able to clearly see and understand that material wealth in itself does

not suffice to bring internal peace and happiness. This is where religion brings its own means to develop inner peace and happiness. All religions have a practice of bringing virtue into one's life and shunning non-virtue. We can see that acquiring the conditions that support happiness and overcoming the conditions that obstruct happiness – i.e. non-virtues. are methods to have happiness.

From the Buddhist tradition, Buddha himself said the cause for unhappiness and dissatisfaction is an unsubdued mind. When one obtains a subdued mind then one will experience mental joy and happiness. When the Buddha presented methods to subdue the mind, he presented methods of how to make the mind serviceable, how to have a happy mind. Thus the technique presented here is to subdue one's mind and to have a positive way of thinking. Not just in Buddhism but all religious traditions have techniques of meditation to bring about a subdued mind, a positiveness in one's mind. The Tibetan term 'Gom' which is translated into English as meditation, literally means 'to familiarise', i.e. familiarising one's mind with positive qualities. Thus, meditation is a technique of familiarising with positiveness. In contrast, if the mind does not intentionally familiarise with positiveness, then it will habitually familiarise with negativity, and that is what causes the problems in one's life.

Within the various different techniques of meditation, there is a technique for the mind to be focused rather than scattered. So the basic technique is to withdraw the mind from all forms of distraction and apply one's focus on a chosen object. When we apply this focus we will find the mind settles down and becomes clearer. Normally we experience a distracted mind, a mind scattered in every direction causing it to become unsubdued. So a technique that will lead the mind to becoming subdued is based on training the mind to be focused.

As mentioned previously meditation is not a unique presentation of Buddhism, you find it in many traditions. Nevertheless, today

meditation is often viewed as something new and trendy. Given that we are engaging in it, it is important to understand the proper technique of how to meditate. If we engage in a proper meditation technique then we can achieve the benefits that are talked about. The basic instruction is to centre and focus the mind, this will enable us to achieve our goals.

Using the analogy of a river, when the water is very diverse, spread over many streams but then channelled into a single stream it is very powerful and can achieve something greater. The scattered streams are going in every direction not having much force, quite dispersed, so like that if our mind is dispersed into many directions then bringing it into a focused, concentrated direction has much more power and is able to achieve great purpose like the river.

When we have the genuine technique to apply this focus to our mind to overcome distraction and dispersal in every direction by applying the effort to have a focused mind, this is one of the greatest gifts to ourselves, an inner wisdom of knowing what is beneficial to oneself and what is harmful to oneself. So rather than relying on others for this and having developed for ourselves the inner wisdom of discerning positive from harmful or non-positive and being able to distinguish this, having this wisdom then we naturally avoid engaging in negative thinking and ways of behaving that are harmful to oneself. Then this is the best asset for oneself and one's mental well-being.

Another point in making one's mind serviceable, this really means having control over oneself, being able to pay attention and focus on the positive things in one's life rather than focusing and paying attention to negativities in one's life. Like going into a shop with a trained dog. The owner instructs the dog to wait outside the shop, you can see if the dog is well-trained it sits still and calmly outside waiting for the owner, not running off elsewhere. So for us making the mind serviceable is making the mind focused and engaging in what is beneficial and avoiding what is harmful. This is a brief introduction to the benefits of meditation to show how it is useful.

In being introduced to the technique of meditation and the benefits, we can see even if one's mind is unruly now, it is possible to train the mind. Geshe Chekawa said in relation to his own mind and training it, 'Does the mind have faults? Yes, an ordinary person's mind has faults but it also has the in-born quality to be trained and to become more subdued'.

The mind has the ability to adopt training in a positive way. This is the natural quality of the mind, thus we have the possibility to have a subdued and controlled mind. When referring to a controlled mind in the Buddhist context - it is the mind not being influenced by the delusions, negative emotions and negative thoughts. When we think about our situation, we see the absurdity that since we have ownership of our mind we should rightly have control over our own mind, however as an ordinary person we don't really have control over our own mind. Rather we are under the control of our mind, and the mind in turn is under the control of the delusions. We have ownership over our body and mind, so not to have this control seems ironic.

To give an example of the consequences of a person under the control of delusion and thus not in control of their mind. To single out one delusion, anger. From the Buddhist view, anger is a negativity. What are the consequences of an individual under the dominance of anger? When under the influence of anger the immediate consequence is to not feel calm and peaceful. Being under its influence leads to engaging in negative actions and speech. We can all relate to the negative consequences of anger.

A delusion is a state of mind that does not perceive the object accurately, it exaggerates the qualities or faults of the object in a misconceived way. This misconception causes the individual to act in a way that brings about ill consequences. We need to see if the mind can be free of anger, can be calm and peaceful, and how to bring this about. By using the meditation technique, focusing on an object which does not cause the delusions to arise, brings the mind into a peaceful state. This is how

we need to understand meditation. Having used the example of when we allow ourselves to be controlled by a mind which is controlled by anger, which brings about harmful consequences for oneself and others, if we train our mind to be free of anger then we are free of the harmful consequences of anger.

A 16-year-old girl once commented in class that she had tried to meditate for one year, she was saying that when she came out of the meditation she would find that anger would still return. It is important to understand that it is not easy to immediately overcome the delusions, but to recognise the need to control the mind to overcome the delusions, and recognise the need to train one's mind is really a significant step.

In relation to individuals who have taken the initiative to apply meditation in life and have seen this as a significant step. Seeing and acknowledging anger is not useful to oneself but destructive to oneself. Seeing this, helps oneself to protect oneself. This is in contrast to earlier in our life when we weren't introduced to anger as negative and instead may have had a view that we needed anger to protect oneself, to protect one's rights and to combat others. So we might have held a view that was in fact destructive to oneself, not conducive to our happiness. When we look around the world, we see some individuals who do not have anger but have joy and happiness. Yet we also see others who are plagued by anger and have no joy and happiness but are always aggravated and causing problems for others. So through these examples we can see that this is also the case for oneself. Similarly this applies to the sense of competitiveness, jealousy et cetera. So we need to fully see the destructive nature of these delusions and then to adopt a positive technique to eliminate these. Eliminating these will have a positive influence on one's life.

To summarise the main points; a sense of happiness or unhappiness is very much dependent on the attitude in our mind, negative attitudes and delusions can be seen as the same. If jealousy is in our mind a disturbance

from this delusion is immediate. As soon as a negativity arises, then to recognise it, 'nip it in the bud', contain it and have a calmness and peace in the mind.

For myself, I can't claim having gained great realisation in my life, but when negativities are absent I have experienced a great sense of joy and happiness in my mind. To be more specific with an explanation of how our mind is influenced by delusion or not, dominated by delusion or not. When the mind is under the dominance of delusion we say the mind is influenced by delusion. For example, with jealousy, we see that jealousy is an attitude, not being happy with the good qualities of someone else. When we are not happy with others doing well, our mind is weighed down, heavy from being unhappy with their success. When we feel happy for their good qualities, for their success at having obtained those good qualities, thinking like this we become immediately joyful.

For example, a husband and wife, the husband is joyful with the beauty of his wife. However, when they go out, and other men see her, he may not be happy to see her looking so attractive. This shows it is not to do with the qualities of the object but with the attitudes in the mind that determine our experience. (Pause for meditation)

For beginners, prone to distraction, focusing on the breath causes the mind to become more tranquil, more subdued. Thus when referring to breath as the object, have a natural flow in and out, pay full attention, bring your full attention and awareness just on the breath. For beginners it is more important to have just a few minutes of focus rather than a long time not so well focused. Tomorrow I will talk about Why love and compassion is most essential in one's life.

Day 2

While adopting a comfortable relaxed posture with a clear relaxed state of mind it is good to do a few minutes of meditation.

As mentioned yesterday, the main purpose of meditation can be summarised as a technique to protect one's mind, particularly to protect one's happy state of mind. The happy state of mind is most important; it is important to protect that quality in one's mind. The meditation technique can be thus understood as a technique to protect happiness within one's mind and to understand the consequence if that sense of joy and happiness within oneself is lost. If that sense of joy and happiness is lost then many other negative things can arise. It is good to understand how the meditation technique protects joy and happiness within oneself. If we can notice that when a certain kind of attitude arises in one's mind - joy and happiness is lost or destroyed, this awareness enables us to see that we are destroying our own happiness.

We normally attribute the causes of happiness to external conditions and tend to believe that the causes for our loss of joy and happiness are dependent on external conditions. When we look into this, from the Buddhist point of view, we find that while external conditions are a contributing factor, the main cause is the loss of a positive attitude within oneself that contributes to the loss of joy and happiness. If one can maintain a positive attitude within oneself then even in the face of unfavourable external circumstances joy and happiness are not lost. This shows us the importance of a positive attitude.

When we are not really paying attention and not looking within ourselves, we do not see that our attitudes are the causes of our joy and happiness. It is not too obscure to acknowledge that by allowing certain situations to affect us and generating a negative attitude about these circumstances we are immediately disturbed. If we are able to maintain a positive attitude, then these same circumstances won't disturb us and we remain calm and stable. We can see our situation or experience is very much dependent on our attitude. In a particular circumstance, if there was no way to be able to change our attitude then we will be victims of our attitude, but if we can see that there is a way to be able to change one's attitude one can develop a positive attitude within oneself.

We have this ability to look within ourselves and to identify beneficial attitudes and to identify harmful attitudes. This ability to identify what is harmful and what is beneficial is an intelligent wisdom. This is a means to be one's own protector, to be accountable to oneself and not be a victim of our attitudes. It is good to recognise this and make this really meaningful in one's life. Self-awareness and self-analysis can become really useful and meaningful in one's life.

Utilising one's own intelligent wisdom becomes the means to maintain one's own integrity in one's life. Whenever we make mistakes in our life, they are normally the result of making a decision when the mind is not clear, when the mind is affected by strong attachment or strong anger and when these intense states of mind are present we make mistakes because these decisions are made in the mind of misapprehension whilst deluded by intense emotion. If we make decisions when free of the intense attachment or anger these tend to be more useful decisions. We may be victims of intense emotions and be born like that but we do have the potential to be free of that. And we can aspire to be free of intense afflictions and to use our life to progress towards that. We can determine not to be victims of these strong delusions and to make decisions that are positive for ourselves. While we are in an unclear state of mind, we can use this experience of the delusions to understand our mind and to see what is needed to be done.

As his Holiness the Dalai Lama says, he has learned the most from the difficulties and problems he has faced. We can take his example and learn from our own difficulties and delusions. It is good for us to recognise that certain experiences cause us to feel really uncomfortable inside. Whatever experiences arise that cause us to feel daunted are not useful or helpful. If certain thoughts, attitudes and recollections did serve to benefit oneself and others then they would make some sense. Since they do not benefit anyone then it is better not to dwell on them, otherwise, we become incapacitated by such thoughts.

For a few moments we can pay particular attention to overcoming these thoughts but seeing that this requires some effort, we can see the need and benefit of eliminating these thoughts in the long term. By seeing that while the negative attitudes remain we are disturbed, grumpy, easily angered et cetera we can see the benefit of meditation in training our mind so that in the longer term our mind is not like that.

As a beginner it is difficult to keep focused but with time and diligence focus can increase. The advice is to work on gradually building up one's focus. In the beginning start with one minute, the next day see if you can maintain focus for two minutes then later three minutes, so then slowly, gradually expand your focus, through practise and familiarity eventually one can focus as long as one wishes. In the beginning it is advised not to be too ambitious but to have good focus, not to engage in a session when the mind going off then bringing it back, again and again. Better to have a session of good focus even if only for a short time. Thus when meditating if one ensures one has full focus, after one to two years one will be able to have half an hour of comfortable focus without distraction. Half an hour of focused meditation is incredibly beneficial. If we train our mind it is possible to achieve that.

While the practice of meditation contributes to a calm and stable mind, it also contributes to our physical health. It contributes to our physical health because good health is dependent on the four elements being in correct balance and harmony. So meditation is not just of benefit for our mind but also for our physical body. Through meditation we develop a joyful, calm and stable mind that will benefit ourselves and also others around us. You will appreciate the positive effect on others.

So seeing this natural benefit to self and others inspires us to increase our determination for the practice. we have all experienced being near someone in a calm and joyful state in our lives. For example, with our own parents we can remember times when there was good harmony and joy so then we experienced the effect of that as well. When our parents

were upset and angry we felt uneasy and disturbed by that. This shows the effect others have on us.

Sitting upright helps the energy channels to straighten out, and this helps the energy flow more easily. As mentioned previously, the meditational object anchors the mind. The mind's function is to cognize something, so it is good to anchor the mind. So we focus on the breath, the natural rhythm of breath going in and out, that is our focus. The meditation instruction manuals say breath is very good to focus on, to calm the mind down and to settle it. The breath is a very personal object, and also because it has no colour or shape by focusing on it excitement and other agitation will not arise in the mind. This is in contrast to other meditation objects which require a lot of thinking and analysis, so the breath is an appropriate object for beginners to focus on when meditating.

To apply this technique in the fullest and most appropriate form we focus on the inhalation and exhalation, to be fully aware of each breath, fully mindful and aware of the breath itself. If other thoughts arise, simply remind oneself that one needs to be focusing on the breath.

As touched upon earlier, in the process of transforming one's mind what is most beneficial is developing kindness. An attitude of kindness is exhibited in two main ways, kindness through love and kindness through compassion. Every religious tradition praises compassion as having supreme qualities. While we may all accept that kindness expressed through love and compassion is supreme, useful, worthy and beneficial, we then need to see what is within oneself that opposes this. What opposes this is the attitude within oneself of self-centredness or what is called self-cherishing.

So although religious traditions all acknowledge the supreme value of love and compassion, it is still useful to see what is described in Buddhism as love and compassion. The value of love goes way beyond religious traditions; it has value in all aspects of daily life. When we write letters

we sign them 'with love' showing how we think it is valuable, but without knowing exactly what love is we may confuse love with attachment. We may say this person will never love me but what we mean is they will never find us attractive. So to describe what love is, in relation to a living being, love is wishing them to have happiness - wishing others who are deprived of happiness to have happiness.

Because of time restraints we can't go into much detail but the Buddhist texts such as Precious Garland go into detailed explanations of what love is and how to meditate on it, so there is the object and the aspect, the object is a living being deprived of happiness and the aspect is wishing them to be happy. There are many benefits to this, we can read the obvious benefits of meditating on love in the teachings, the teachings give great detail concerning what benefits there are and also what opposes love. What hinders love is harmfulness, when this is present love is not present. When love is developed what it overcomes is harmfulness. It overcomes any intention to harm the other, how wonderful it would be if all living creatures were endowed with happiness, may they have happiness.

Then we take the personal commitment to ensure that they have happiness. So in the teachings, love focuses on all living beings but in a practical way one starts by generating this wish to those who are close to us, surrounding us. We do this to overcome the issue of saying we have love towards all living beings but then not being able to express love to those close to oneself. How wonderful if all beings were happy, may they be happy, this thought is a great transformation from an attitude of indifference to them. To see this as a great transformation and then taking personal responsibility to bring this about is the attitude to have and to bring about transformation of others. What is of concern to ourselves is the practical expression of love and compassion.

As ordinary beings it may not be possible to have a relationship completely devoid of attachment. So there is love mixed with

attachment. However we need to look beyond the attachment and try to develop a true sense of love, If it is a true sense of love, that is what will maintain and hold the relationship. If our relationship is based solely on attachment then when the attachment lessens, as the element that holds the relationship wanes the relationship can fall apart. In contrast if we hold the well-being of the other as our main focus and have no intention to harm them, then their happiness becomes our primary concern. When someone does this then naturally there is a trust. Love is most essential in one's life. The natural aid for survival is the love of our mother, we are nurtured by unconditional love. Our parents or caretaker's concern for our welfare is what has sustained us. For own survival love has played a crucial role.

Now, in relation to compassion the object is a being who is experiencing misery, suffering or unpleasantness. Compassion is wishing them to be free of that suffering. We can see love and compassion are the means to foster genuine concern for another person. When we say we want to benefit others then there is no other way to do so other than wishing them to be free of suffering and to have happiness. On a personal level, when we take the initiative to ensure one's partner is free of misery and suffering and has happiness then with this attitude there is no way for the harmful mind to arise. As a human we can appreciate this, even in the animal realm this is appreciated and honoured by animals. An animal appreciates the love, concern and affection of their master. One of the attendees here had to leave to care for her 21-year-old cat. She was genuinely concerned for her cat and has spent thousands in care for the cat. Others who have had pets for many years, say their best companion is their pet, as it never shows any anger - only affection and concern, so this shows the benefits of the owners care and concern. The immediate benefit of love and compassion is a direct contribution to genuine trust and concern. It opposes any sense of harm to the other, so to develop this love and compassion immediately contributes to the well-being of oneself and others.

To further emphasise the benefits of love and compassion one can think about situations and times of difficulty and hardship. During these times the ones that will come to our aid are the ones with genuine concern for us, not the ones who are just infatuated with attachment. In fact, it is the one who is infatuated with attachment who will desert us when some difficulty arises. So seeing in our life, who was there to assist us we can see who has a genuine sense of love and compassion, for example our mother had a great sense of love and compassion when she came to help us.

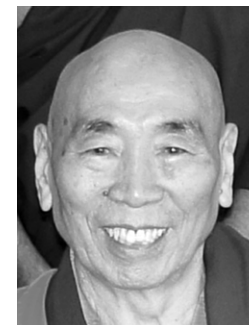
To see that the ultimate, unfailing companion is love and compassion and to see the value of this, and then to expect love and compassion in others, but not to develop it in oneself is presumptuous and unfair. So we need to see the value of love and compassion and develop these. This is what I have experienced and what I have come to believe and understand.

In the Warrnambool group, study with purpose to increase love and compassion. The only way to have a good sense of companionship is by developing concern, love and compassion for each other. The main contributing factor for good relationships in a community is harmony. This comes about from positive ways of thinking and positive attitudes, these contribute harmony.



The Eight Verses of Mind Training

Day 1, 2013



I'm very glad that we get an opportunity to meet again. Our gathering as such is with a joyous mind, a mind of considering each other as good friends and companions. It is with that frame of mind that we engage in this activity of sharing the Buddha's teachings or the Buddhadharma. This sort of way of conducting one's mind set when we have a gathering on any occasion is quite a worthwhile way to think. This is important.

Whatever occasion it may be when you gather together amongst friends, like-minded people or relatives, it actually ensures that it becomes a joyous gathering and a gathering where there is a good rapport and good communication. All of that actually depends on the mind or the mental attitude that one carries and that is something which is significant.

The reason I feel it is significant to consider what contributes to a joyous occasion with others is because of the fact that we do have to associate with others. It is the very nature of our existence that we have to interact and deal with others so thus it is worthwhile for us to really consider what contributes to good communication and a good feeling with others.

We can consider that the reason why we need to pay attention to all of this is because, as individual human beings, we naturally and spontaneously wish to be happy. We also have a given right to experience happiness. However what we need to consider is how to achieve happiness in our life? It is definitely not just relying on external conditions such as money, wealth and so forth. External factors such as friends and companions can contribute to a certain extent to our well-being and happiness, however the main point here that we really need to recognise is that the real source or cause of happiness lies within one's own mind. That is something we need to recognise.

In relation to the actual external sources I personally feel that amongst the various external conditions a good and harmonious relationship with others is one of the main sources of happiness in relation to our present life. Our day-to-day happiness is very much dependent on the good relations we have with others, so this is also a significant point to consider.

Something which I regularly emphasise as well in relation to understanding who we are and what we strive for is that we need to first of all recognise that we as individuals are the sum of three main factors. There is this identity of ourselves that we call 'me' or 'I' and that is one factor. Then in relation to the 'me' or 'I' there are two other main factors that sum up our identity, which are one's body and one's mind. These three sum up one's identity of who we are.

Thus to emphasise the connection that we have with our body and mind is that whenever we relate to our well-being it is always in relation to either the state of one's body or mind. If one's body is in good sound health we can claim 'I am healthy' and when our mind is in a happy state, we can claim 'I am happy'. There is no other way for us to claim our well-being which is not related to our body and mind.

Since our well-being is directly related to our physical body and mind, as I emphasise regularly in my talks, we really need to pay attention to both our physical well-being and our mental well-being. Whatever conducive factors contribute to one's physical well-being and mental well-being are things that we need to adopt and acquire. Now again the external conditions are, of course, necessary for us as we do depend and rely upon good external conditions, but just to point out again that it is not merely the external good conditions that contribute to one's overall well-being, particularly one's mental happiness.

The fact is that it doesn't entirely depend upon the external conditions, for example, when someone is staying in a very nice house but is quite miserable because their mind is not really happy. Just by having a nice, expensive house they cannot claim to be happy if internally they're not really settled and their mind is not happy. In simple terms, external conditions cannot guarantee our happiness; we cannot point to our good external conditions and say because I have all this, therefore I am happy. So, clearly external conditions alone are not sufficient.

Thus when we recognise that our well-being and happiness are directly related to our physical and mental well-being, then with that understanding and acceptance, it becomes essential and worthwhile to pay attention to protecting one's physical conditions for one's physical well-being as well as the conducive conditions for one's mental well-being. By analysing and thinking about how best to improve one's physical conditions and more importantly the conditions for one's mental well-being, this very analysis and contemplation of how to acquire the good conditions for one's physical and mental well-being is in itself a contributing factor towards one's well-being.

When we have identified that the real causes for one's well-being lie within our own mind rather than outside and actually recognise that the analysing and identifying of the internal conditions and factors as a state of mind or as an attitude, then that very contemplation,

because it involves looking within rather than looking outside, becomes like a meditation practice itself because we are focusing within rather than focusing outside. That very factor of looking within becomes a conducive factor to settle one's mind down to become more calm and tranquil.

These points are something which we really need to pay attention to and think about over and over again until we actually develop a conviction within oneself that it is not just a hypothesis, but in fact it is definitely true that one's own well-being is dependent on one's physical well-being and mental well-being. There is no other way for one to experience well-being and happiness, without relying on good physical conditions and a good mental state. That affirmation will thus become the impetus for us to really pay attention to further develop oneself and increase those good physical conditions within oneself, as well as mental conditions for one's happiness. In relation to one's physical conditions we will then naturally take an interest in protecting one's health. Whatever necessary conditions we need to acquire for one's health, such as adopting a healthy lifestyle, consuming nutritious food and exercising are things we will naturally take an interest in because we know that it contributes to one's physical well-being.

Similarly, and more importantly is to consider and really think about the conditions we need for one's mental well-being, such as the clarity our mind needs in order for us to fully utilise the great mental potential we have. We need to first secure a clear and bright state of mind, and within that clear and bright state of mind we can then further develop the main quality or condition for one's mental well-being which is, in simple terms our own intelligence; more specifically it is an intelligence that arises from one's deep insight called wisdom.

When we further develop the clarity, brightness and that wisdom within oneself we acquire and strengthen those positive conditions within oneself. So in relation to one's physical and mental well-being

we need to really pay attention to the point where we realise that if we are not aware it would be detrimental, and if we don't pay attention to acquiring good physical conditions we may experience ill-health that can be really disastrous for one's well-being.

Likewise, in mental states if we don't really pay attention to protecting those good conditions within one's mind it can be disastrous for oneself and it can be the most detrimental factor for losing one's mental peace, tranquillity and happiness. These are points that I raise again and again and emphasise because I feel that paying attention and thinking about these points really benefits one's life. These are important factors if one is leading a normal life in a mundane world but also if one is spiritually inclined these are extremely essential points that one needs to consider for spiritual development.

This advice on ways of looking at what contributes to one's well-being in one's life is something that I share regularly with anyone I relate to but particularly I focus on the younger generation. I tell those of the younger generation directly that what determines your future is entirely dependent on how you utilise your time now in your present time. If you utilise your time and energy to pay significant attention to your studies and protect your health then that will definitely contribute to a good future in this life and you will have a good successful future, whereas if you were to not pay attention and completely neglect the time of your prime of youth, which is particularly between the ages of fifteen to thirty, it can be a great loss for this life.

With my own experience of growing up I can definitely relate to that period between fifteen and thirty as being the prime time where one's intelligence has this natural ability to really increase and one has a sort of inner strength and capacity to learn and expand one's knowledge. It is the prime time that one really needs to utilise. The young people that I am referring to particularly are in the years between sixteen and seventeen, up until then the parents and teachers would have a

strong influence in their lives and they were completely dependent on the care and the nurturing and the finances of the parents and other contributors. When they reach a certain age in their teens where they feel like now they can be independent, that is a time when they are actually most vulnerable to the negative influences or being completely misled.

So that is why I share this with those that I associate with and those that I can relate to. I've shared this and some of them have later confided in me that having shared that advice earlier on, it has benefited them and has helped them to focus on their life and make sure they're going in the right direction. Never-the-less of course the advice is not limited to only the young as whatever age we may be we all have the responsibility for our own well-being. We cannot expect others to make us entirely happy or rely on external conditions and stimulants for us to be happy. We cannot possibly expect that and, as mentioned earlier, the real sources of our happiness and well-being lie within ourselves.

One needs to take the initiative oneself in relation to protecting one's health, acquiring the positive qualities for one's mind, increasing one's intelligence or wisdom and adopting the positive attitudes within one's mind. It is an initiative and responsibility that one has to take oneself. These inner qualities are what I would consider one's most prized possessions and no external thing would have as much value or contributing factor to one's happiness and well-being. So that is something we need to pay attention to.

Because of the reasons that were mentioned earlier the conclusion that we come to is that it is really important to protect one's mind as a way to ensure that we secure the conditions for one's mental well-being. So the question now is how do we do that? How do we apply that protection for one's mind? First of all, in relation to one's physical well-being and health that is something that most of us are already quite

skilled at and we know what is detrimental to our health and what are the conducive factors for our physical health. This is something that is quite obvious and we are all quite knowledgeable about that.

So here the significant point that we really need to consider is how do we actually obtain and protect our mental happiness and well-being? As mentioned previously external conditions can and do contribute to a certain extent for one's mental well-being. With our experience we can all safely assume that definitely they do have a contributing factor. It will be the situation, especially for those over thirty, that having experienced various situations in life we come to the point where it is quite easy to recognise that mental well-being does not rely entirely upon external conditions.

In fact, the main contributing factor for one's mental well-being lies within and there must be something else besides just external conditions. You might all have your own personal experiences and I have also seen situations of where, despite the external good conditions, people are not totally happy and satisfied.

To relate a particular example, when I was once in Western Australia I was invited to stay with a very wealthy family with a huge, multi-million-dollar house which was very grand and fancy. As I stayed there for a few days the wife one day in conversation with me confided that her husband was not really a happy person and said that the look under his eyes was also sort of dark blue which means a sign of tiredness. Apparently the reason they were in a very wealthy situation was because the husband was the head of a company where I think over two hundred people were working under him. The wife herself seemed to be quite happy and joyous. Apparently what had happened to make her joyful and happy was that she had taken the initiative to learn some particular meditation that she went to and even at home she was applying that meditation technique. So while she seemed to be quite joyous she was telling me that her husband was not a very

joyous or happy and relaxed person. So I had that experience of witnessing myself that with all the wealth and grandeur it still didn't guarantee someone to be joyful and happy. On the other hand, once when I was in Queensland, I noticed someone living on a very small boat who came out and he didn't have his shirt on and he seemed very joyous and he told me that 'yes I am staying on this boat and I have no worries'. He seemed like a very carefree and joyous person and even though he had just a very small boat and no proper house to live in that didn't seem to worry him. He said he had been living in the boat for seven years.

If we still think our happiness is dependent upon external conditions that of course is understandable because that is the strong cultural influence and the experience we have. The influence we have is that we are brought up with the idea, especially in the west, that your happiness is dependent on amassing wealth. However, if you have now experienced some disappointment and dissatisfaction with external conditions and so forth it is a significant point and time in life to really consider that there are other ways of acquiring the conditions for one's well-being and happiness, which lie within. That is something that we need to recognise.

Despite the external conditions of hardships, lack of sufficient means and wealth and so forth, being joyous and happy is an experience that I definitely have had many times over in my life and that is something that I can say I have experience with. If I were to relay all the incidents and all the details of the hardships that I've gone through in my life I am sure it will bring tears to your eyes whereas, if I was to try to share the joyousness that I have now within myself then I'm sure that would make you smile and laugh too.

So what I've been emphasising is that it is really important to protect the main factors that contribute to one's well-being, which is our physical health and our mental health. Amongst these two protecting

one's mental health and well-being is of primary importance. We can see the reason is because in relation to physical health the modern facilities, instruments and so forth are really advanced and are able to diagnose very accurately what the physical ailments are and what the causes may be.

They have got sophisticated machinery and I've had experience myself when I went to have a check-up not too long ago. The machines they were using seemed to be really sophisticated and able to detect what is going on in the body very clearly. Because of all this advanced technology in the diagnostic system that then means when a physical disease is diagnosed the medication to overcome that ailment becomes easier to find and administer. So these days many of the diseases which may have been considered incurable in the past because they couldn't find the causes can now be dealt with and be cured.

Thus in relation to our physical health there are many facilities available to deal with our physical ailments whereas when it comes to mental illnesses and anything which is related to the psychological aspect of ourselves, this is an area which is still not very clear. Even with all the modern facilities they are not able to pinpoint and find what is the main cause of certain mental ailments. We cannot see the mind but of course they now use measurements and some diagnostic systems where they can make assumptions, although it cannot be one-hundred-percent accurate as to what the causes are. Therefore, it is not easy to administer the proper kind of medication and because it is psychological factors, even with medicines it is not easy to actually cure the illness.

The main point here is that because it is much more difficult to deal with the symptoms of a mental illness or a psychological problem and it is much more difficult to find a cure when it actually occurs, we therefore need to pay attention on our personal level and for others, to protect our mental well-being. From the very onset we need to be

cautious and to apply whatever is necessary to protect our mental well-being. That is the main point.

So what is being presented here from the Buddhist perspective is that which protects and helps one's mental happiness to not decline is actually protecting the mind. That is the connection. That is the means.

The relevant question that we now need to ask is how do we protect our mind and what are we protecting it from? That is the relevant question we need to raise.

In relation to the typical question of what would be the consequences if we don't protect our mind and why do we need to protect our mind? A very easy example of the negative consequences and disadvantages of not protecting one's mind would be allowing ourselves to be influenced by a state of mind which we call 'anger'. When anger arises within one's mind it is a state of mind that arises within oneself without anyone implanting anger within us. It is not as if others are implanting the anger and we might say someone else makes me angry. Actually we all know we have the ownership of the state of mind of anger so when anger arises within oneself how do we feel? We do not feel joyful and happy and our own experience is that we feel agitated. We are not feeling comfortable or tranquil and peaceful while in a state of mind of anger.

Likewise, a jealous mind is not a happy mind and again our mind is disturbed and agitated. Similarly, when we feel competitive with others we are not feeling settled or joyful and happy. There is always this sense of having to catch up and compete with another and trying to be always a step ahead of others which brings us a lot of anxiety. When we have a competitive state of mind it doesn't make us feel peaceful and joyful. These are simple examples of how in relation to one's own experience our own mind is.

So what is happening is that we are lacking control over our own emotions and our own state of mind. When we cannot control our own mind or emotions then what happens is we ourselves are controlled by what we call a 'delusion' or a negative state of mind, such as the examples given earlier of anger and jealousy and so forth. When the mind is influenced by these negative states of mind called delusions, that is when we lose control over our own senses and thus our mind becomes disturbed. We can definitely see the ill consequences of a mind which is influenced and controlled by a negative state of mind or a delusion such as anger and so forth. We completely fall victim to that and we become completely agitated, unhappy and uncomfortable.

Thus if we were to apply a measure so that we don't allow our mind to be influenced by negative states of mind to a greater extent, such as anger and so forth then our minds will become relatively more settled, much less agitated, less confused and there will be less anxiety within one's mind. In summary, the conclusion is that we need to be in control of our own mind and that applying a measure to control one's own state of mind or emotions is what we refer to here as protecting the mind. The protection of the mind comes with that control.

In contemplating the earlier points, we can then come to the conclusion that what destroys our happiness, particularly in relation to our mental happiness, is something that lies within ourselves rather than outside. That which destroys our happiness is our own negative states of mind which can also be referred to as the negative attitude we have, or what is also called the delusions such as anger, jealousy and so forth.

We can apply appropriate measures and take control of our own situation making the determination that, 'I am not going to allow the negative states of mind to destroy my happiness' and 'I'm not going to allow my anger to take control over me', when we make that decision and apply the appropriate measures then that is when we are actually protecting one's mind. Not giving the power or authority to the

negative state of mind and controlling one's own state of mind requires one to first identify what anger is and recognise it for its disadvantages and its ill effects. Again that means relating to situations in one's own life of how for example, one moment we may be happily enjoying good communication and company with others and everything is fine, but then for whatever reason we might start becoming agitated and start to feel angry.

The moment anger arises the state of mind of feeling joyful, happy and relaxed is completely disrupted because of that negative state of mind of anger which takes dominance and control over our mind. We need to actually take the initiative to apply the protection to one's own mind where we don't allow our mind to be under the dominance and control of these negative states of mind such as anger and so forth. This requires, as I mentioned earlier, thinking again and again about the disadvantages of anger and the positive benefits and advantages of applying the opposite of anger which is the practice of patience and so forth. By contemplating and thinking about this again and again, we then become more equipped with the methods and ways of how to control one's mind and so it is in this way that we start to improve.

It is at this point in relaying the methods and ways of how to protect one's mind that the meditation technique becomes relevant. To understand how the meditation technique works as a method to protect one's mind we again consider how the state of mind of anger manifests within oneself. It is in relation to bringing to mind an object that causes us distress or unpleasantness. Whatever object it may be it will be one which appears to us as being unattractive or unappealing and because of that unappealing nature it actually causes us distress and thus the more we focus on that object and we see the negative attributes of that object, the more it causes our mind to become agitated and thus anger manifests.

Because the state of mind of anger arises in relation to focusing on an unappealing object the meditation technique involves choosing an appropriate object which does not cause the delusions such as anger, jealousy and so forth to arise. We choose either a neutral or positive object and apply a single-pointed focus on that chosen object. When we are applying that meditation technique appropriately by focusing on this object, because our mind is diverted from the object which caused a delusion such as anger to arise, it will appease the mind and our mind, even if initially a little bit upset or agitated, will become peaceful. This is what the meditation technique and focusing on an appropriate object involves.

So having explained and described thus far how our minds are disturbed and how the happiness in our mind is destroyed by none other than our own internal negative thoughts and emotions. Having also further described how the meditation technique actually serves as a means to overcome these negative states of mind, it should become quite evident and clear to oneself that one's mental happiness is definitely in one's own hands. It is dependent upon ourselves and is within our own reach. That is because specifically anger is none other than a state of mind that we have ownership over.

As mentioned previously the anger that disturbs our minds arises from none other than within our own minds. The method and technique to be free from a state of mind of anger and be in a state of mind free of anger or jealousy and so forth is something that one can develop and thus one has the choice of what state of mind to be in. Both cases of our mind being disturbed and in a negative state, or being in a happy state, is really dependent on ourselves. It is our choice. Of course the reason we feel that we so easily become victims to anger and other negative states of mind is none other than because of habituation.

We are habituated to feel emotions such as anger whenever something goes wrong and this is why we feel we are dominated by the negative

state of mind. So it is just because of long habituation with these negative states of mind that they seem to arise spontaneously. Conversely what we need to familiarise our minds with again and again is the technique which will allow one to have control over one's own mind and emotions. We are familiarising with the state of mind which is focused on an appropriate or virtuous object when we use the meditation technique. Once we understand the meditation technique, it is a matter of applying it again and again.

So that is why I encourage people to adopt a regular meditation technique in one's daily life. If we can spare even a short time for meditation, and we do it appropriately, we will feel the benefit and we will definitely experience the release of an otherwise agitated or very busy mind, and we will experience tranquillity. Even if it is only for a short time it would be wonderful to feel a genuine sense of tranquillity and peace within one's mind. Of course it may not last long if we do not have a lot of spare time for meditation, but with the familiarity brought about by adopting the technique again and again in one's daily life, it will be really worthwhile.

Besides that, even in our everyday life, what I emphasise as being really essential and useful for one's life, is to really check one's thoughts and ask oneself if one's attitudes and thoughts are going in the right direction, that which is conducive for one's well-being and for the well-being of others or not. Asking ourselves what kind of thoughts we are preoccupied with, are they good thoughts and attitudes or are they negative thoughts and attitudes? This kind of analysis, checking one's own state of mind is really a useful practice.

To emphasise this point, we can also relate to the advice of the great Indian master Shantideva in his famous work *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. He mentioned that if you want to have conducive physical and verbal actions check one's state of mind first before engaging in any physical or verbal actions. Having checked your state of mind, if you

find that your mind is agitated or your mind is under the influence of anger for example, then temporarily don't engage in physical actions or verbal speech. It is better to just wait for some time and once you find that your mind is clear and no longer agitated, then it is suitable to engage in physical actions or verbal speech. This advice is something many have found to be extremely useful in their life and I also regularly emphasise the point about really checking one's state of mind first before engaging in any action. First of all, check the situation in relation to one's own state of mind and then also in relation to the circumstances of what physical actions or verbal actions we engage in. It is very important that we check and assess the situation to see whether it is going to be beneficial or not and then engage only if it is going to be of benefit for oneself or others.

So thus as I also regularly emphasise it is very important to analyse any situation with one's intelligence or wisdom, particularly a discriminative wisdom used in identifying and analysing the positives and negatives of the situation or an activity. After thoroughly analysing and checking it out with one's wisdom, to whatever extent one has the capacity, we then engage in the action. As we do this process of analysing the situation before we take action, it will become a habit and then becomes a means for one to really increase and develop one's intelligence or wisdom, which assists us in whatever activities we do and whatever decisions we need to make.

If decisions are made upon the basis of having analysed the situation and having thoroughly checked out the pros and cons of the situation then it is most likely that whatever we adopt will be more meaningful and fruitful. We would be able to engage in any action without much hesitation or doubt in one's mind rather than always being completely reliant on others. So these are just some simple points that I wanted to share with you.

This advice of using one's own intelligence to assess the situation and judging whether it is something that is conducive or beneficial or not, is something which I share particularly with the younger generation. If we don't adopt this practice of analysing and really checking out the situation then that is when we can become easily influenced by others. Negative friends can influence one to adopt habits or engage in activities which are harmful and which can mislead us. Often it is because we have not paid attention to our own better judgement that we follow other's advice and then at a later stage we might claim that we were negatively influenced by bad friends. To whatever degree that is true or not, it ultimately falls upon oneself to not pay attention to others and to really assess the situation for oneself first.

So adopting this practice of using one's own wisdom and analysing the situation for oneself becomes an optimum way to ensure that one does not become easily influenced by others who might mislead us. Of course the positive influence is something that we need to have. We need to have others who guide us in the right direction and we need to recognise the positive advice that is conducive for our well-being. So this sort of practice is thus very important.

This is again where the meditation technique becomes really appropriate and in actual fact essential for one's well-being, particularly in relation to developing a clear mind and being able to develop that sort of wisdom to distinguish between what is useful and what is harmful. Then we can adopt what is useful and protect oneself from what is harmful. That sort of discriminative wisdom can come about only from a clear awareness or state of mind. That clear awareness or state of mind is something that we are nurturing and that we are developing further in the practice of meditation.

To give a particular example in relation to what is harmful to oneself would be the state of mind of anger. We need to pay attention and use our wisdom to identify anger and distinguish between the

disadvantages of anger and the benefits of adopting the mind which is not influenced by anger. If we haven't done that analysis in weighing up the benefits and the harms of anger, we will not readily be able to assist and we might be easily influenced again by a negative state of mind of anger. So that process of analysing and thinking is really essential to secure one's own state of mind and well-being. It is in these ways that we can briefly understand the benefit of the practice of meditation.

Having mentioned that we can now do some meditation. I would assume that many of you are already quite familiar with the meditation practice as many of you are already older students of meditation, so I think we can use whatever time we have left now for adopting a few minutes of meditation. That would be useful and worthwhile.

For those who are a little bit new to meditation practice the main thing to keep in mind is to first of all adopt an appropriate physical posture, which needs to be a relaxed and comfortable posture while trying to have an upright posture keeping the spine straight. The significance of having an upright, straight posture is that it will allow what we call the 'energy channels' within our body to loosen up. We do not want any obstruction in our energy channels within our body so that the subtle energy, also known as 'wind energy', flows well within one's body. When we adopt this posture of sitting upright then as we straighten out our energy channels within our body and the subtle wind energy flows well within our body, it helps the mind to become fresh and clear. We then use this fresh and clear state of mind to focus on the chosen object for our meditation.

Most importantly, along with that appropriate physical posture, is the state of mind itself. A mind which, for the next few minutes, is determined not to go into its normal habituated pattern of completely following every whimsical thought that arises. A mind determined to refrain from entertaining oneself in that way and making the

determination that for the purpose of the meditation, for these next few minutes, 'I will bring my full attention and focus within and not allow it to be distracted with either external distractions or even thoughts. I will bring my focus within and bring my full attention upon the object of the meditation'. For our purpose of meditation now we will use the object of our own breath. So based on the rhythm of the natural inflow and outflow of our breath, which is not at all laboured but a very gentle breath, we are fully focused and mindful of the breath coming in and going out. It is in this way for the next few minutes when we adopt this technique that it will then be the appropriate meditation technique to develop our single pointed concentration. (Pause for meditation)

As we might have noticed in our short session, as far as the technique is concerned, it is not very complicated. Basically we are deciding to just focus on our breath. However what we would perhaps find difficult is maintaining our focus on the breath or whatever object we choose. That ability to maintain our focus on the chosen object is something which of course does not come about easily for beginners, but it is important initially not to be too concerned about having a long period of maintaining one's focus on the object. We can be content and happy even with a short time of being able to focus on the object. It is far better to maintain a short focus on the object and having done that well, being satisfied with that initially and then slowly through acquainting oneself with this practice again and again slowly expanding one's ability to focus longer. That is far better and, initially, quality is much more important than the quantity.

As we adopt this technique and become more and more familiar with it then gradually we will be able to expand our duration of being able to focus single pointedly on the object.

If we initially attempt to have a long meditation session when in fact we are not yet able to focus well, and we put more importance on the length of the time, then that in itself will become a habit where we are

not really focused well. If we are trying to have long periods of time for meditation, we will eventually become really tired and distressed with the situation and we might give up meditation completely. That will be a loss and an unfortunate situation so it is better to adopt it slowly taking the gradual approach.

I have explained the specifics of the sitting posture in detail previously so for those who are quite new to meditation it would be good for you to get a further understanding about that from sharing and discussion with the older students.

So by adopting the meditation technique we are ultimately attempting to acquaint our mind with the good habit of thinking in a positive way. The ultimate purpose or goal of the meditation practice is to really adopt positive states of mind as opposed to negative states of mind. Amongst the negative states of mind, which really harm oneself, is that of the self-centred mind. The way to oppose that self-centredness in the most optimum way is to adopt love and compassion. Unconditional love and compassion is a state of mind which takes the other's interests as primary importance. It is a state of mind which is imbued with the wish to benefit others. That attitude or state of mind of wishing to benefit others is the most optimum state of mind and ultimately we need to work on and further develop that sense of love and compassion within ourselves.

As a practice and for guidelines to increase love and compassion and further strengthen and develop love and compassion within our heart we can follow the advice given by the great master Langri Thangpa in his work called *The Eight Verses of Mind Training*. The actual practice presented in this short text is not an easy practice, but attempting to do that or even just relating to these techniques and methods by feeling inspired to practise in this way is already of great benefit. So therefore for our session tomorrow I'm going to attempt to cover as much as we can of these points that are presented in what

is called The Eight Verses of Mind Training composed by the great master, Langri Thangpa.

What is it that contributes to our overall well-being in general and also specifically our natural wish to be considered as a good, relaxed and easy person to be with? We relate to those attributes in others and we also would like to have those attributes of being considered a good-natured and comfortable person to be with. So we need to really consider what are the contributing factors of all these qualities and attributes that we wish to adopt ourselves and wish to see in others. They come from none other than the attitudes we adopt in our mind. What is called a good character or good manners really stems from our attitudes and states of mind and that is why there is a strong emphasis in Buddhism on how to develop and work on the mind.

Another significant point that we need to really recognise is that what is presented as these great positive attitudes of love and compassion is not alien to us and we all have the basis of love and compassion within ourselves. We all have that potential for love and compassion within ourselves at all times so it is a matter of identifying it and developing it further. The more we develop that true sense of love and compassion within ourselves it naturally contributes to a happier, more joyful state of mind and thus a good person or a relaxed person comes around as a result of that.

We all appreciate someone who is considered to be a kind person and so when someone is very kind we need to really consider where do those attributes and qualities of kindness stem from? It is from a sense of love and compassion and a true concern they have within their heart for others.

When there is a true sense of concern which stems from love and compassion then that is appreciated not only by other humans but

even cats and dogs and other animals immediately respond to that. Thus we can see that when owners of pets, such as dogs and cats, have a true sense of concern for their pets, these pets immediately respond to that and they always come to the owner wanting to be near and show a lot of affection.

Now for some people who have pets but don't show that much of a concern then they are not really connected with their pets in a true sense. Of course the pets would still have to come out and see the owners because they want to be fed. So when the food is being laid out they would have to come because they are dependent upon their owners to feed them but when the food is not around they might shy away and not come too near and that is because they don't feel the warmth from the owner.

As mentioned previously we all have that potential to naturally draw others to oneself. That potential stems from love and compassion and the more we develop a true sense of concern for others based on love and compassion then naturally it will draw others towards oneself. Naturally people will feel a strong affinity and sense of joy to be around us and that is the best way to draw more friends and companions for oneself.

When I was living up in Queensland at the Chenrezig Buddhist Institute, I had an experience of befriending a peacock. Initially when I was trying to give it food it would be very cautious and would only come and accept the food when I threw from a distance. Over time it slowly began to come closer and closer, even as an animal it had that knowledge and understanding that I was not a threat and I was trying to be friendly, and after some time it would eat out of my hand. There was a routine where it would come exactly at five o'clock every evening and would go around the deck looking in the windows and waiting for me to come out.

In another incident where I live now in Melbourne there was a monk called Thupten Donyo. He told me how he befriended a possum. We used to have possums coming quite regularly outside the windows. In the small room that he was living in there was a small patio outside the window and he would give bread to the possums. He told me that after becoming acquainted with one of the possums he started to touch its head before he gave it the bread and because of that the possum seemed to have recognised that as the way the food was given, so when it came later it would always bend its head first. (Much laughter) So it seemed that the possum developed the recognition that in order to get this meal it had to bend its head first. That is the training that even an animal comes to recognise.

So it is good for us to relate to how even animals have this degree of intelligence of being able to understand and learn. Of course for us humans we definitely have a much greater extent of intelligence and understanding that we can develop and further utilise.

We have come to our scheduled end time for the session, however if you are not in a rush and you have one or two questions I can address them. If you don't have questions we can do dedication, then. If you don't have any questions that makes it easier for me!

Thank you very much. I'm not implying that I gave a good talk but I appreciate you paying great attention. You all listened very well, so thank you.

Day 2

So just as we did last night it would be good for us to do some meditation first. For that purpose, we'll sit in a comfortable, relaxed posture. Likewise, it's good to ensure that we have a focused mind, distancing our attention from all other forms of distractions and bringing our focus and attention inward. It is also good to generate

a good intention or good motivation for the practice. So the motivation can also be understood as the purpose or goal of what we are meditating for.

In brief the most positive and optimum state of mind one can generate would be to think, 'in order to benefit all living beings, I will myself endeavour to assist beings to be in a happy state and to relieve them from all suffering. May I be able to do that'. This can be the positive motivation that we generate. Let us spend a few moments generating that motivation within ourselves, and then we can focus on our breath for a few minutes. (Pause for meditation)

As mentioned in our session last night it is really essential that we take some measures to apply the technique which helps us to have a clear and bright state of mind and most importantly to also protect the positiveness within our mind. Taking that initiative ourselves and thinking about that periodically while trying to apply the practice would be really worthwhile.

A practical reason, or approach to the need for having a clear and relaxed state of mind is that we do want to achieve great things in life. There are so many goals that we set for ourselves to achieve. Now in order to attain whatever it is that we are seeking we need to have a relatively clear, focused and calm mind, because if our mind is in upheaval and completely agitated, it hinders whatever activity that we are engaging in and whatever we need to accomplish will not be very effective. So that is another practical reason for the need of meditation that we can consider.

Another way that I would approach and think about the need or even the possibility to have a clear and bright state of mind is that it is something that we can do.

Our well-being or happiness is related to our state of mind and therefore the problem is also related to our state of mind. To take

this nation of Australia as an example, I've lived here for nearly 30 years and it is obviously a country with so many good resources. It is a beautiful country with resources and the government system is also well established. We can safely say that there is no-one living in Australia facing extreme poverty where they could die from a situation of not having enough food, drink or adequate shelter. I personally haven't seen or heard about this and I wonder if there are any accounts of people being so destitute and impoverished that they don't have enough to eat in order to survive.

Of course this is in comparison to countries where people are dying because of those very reasons of not having enough food, drink or adequate shelter. There are so many poor nations where people are exposed to the extremes of the elements and extreme poverty, and because of these hardships eventually they are not able to survive. As mentioned earlier, given the fact that no-one in Australia would face conditions of such extreme poverty, this means there is enough food, drink and shelter for the majority of people, and so we can say that the living standard is quite good.

Nevertheless, we find that many people are experiencing some sort of unsettled mind. In all walks of life we find people who are quite well off, famous and wealthy who are not happy and still experience a sense of being unsettled. I feel this is a very good example to demonstrate what causes mental unhappiness. So in our case feeling unsettled and unhappy is not related so much to our external conditions but rather related to a mental attitude or state of mind that prevents one from feeling gratitude and a sense of well-being.

I regularly contemplate about what are the factors which cause people who have adequate, good conditions for their living standards and so forth, to be unhappy, unsettled and not be completely satisfied. As I think about it more and more I definitely feel that it is because of their minds being completely overwhelmed and obsessed with a lot of

disturbing, discursive thoughts. The literal translation is superstitious thoughts and includes all discursive thoughts that one conjures up in one's mind and gives so much weight and importance to.

These are disturbing thought patterns that we hold onto and when we become obsessed with them this is what seems to really cause all kinds of disturbing states of mind such as anxiety, depression and so forth. My feeling is that because it is created through one's own mental patterns it can be changed by adopting another kind of mental pattern. Because of the disturbing mental patterns that we are habituated with we become obsessed with a lot of unnecessary and disturbing thoughts, worries, anxieties and fears but when we recognise this we have the power to change it.

It is in our own interests, for our own well-being, that we take the initiative to change it. This is again where the meditation practice will assist one to change the thought patterns to become more positive in one's way of thinking. I feel that this practise of meditation is an appropriate one to help those of us who have adequate means for survival and good living standards but are still not happy. Conversely asking people who are completely impoverished and on the verge of starvation to begin a meditation practice to help solve their problems would not be very appropriate. Of course meditation might help to some degree but actually the immediate help they need is some food so that they do not die of starvation.

Likewise, for those who don't have shelter and so forth, the appropriate external conditions for their survival are the immediate needs for their well-being. It is not an appropriate time to introduce the meditation technique to people who are impoverished. So here we can see how the meditation technique is relevant for us who have all the good conditions for our living standards, but nevertheless we are not feeling settled and our state of mind is not really happy.

To adopt this meditation technique encompasses not just sitting down and focusing on one object, but also checking out one's state of mind and really investigating what goes on in one's mind. We can ask ourselves 'what is the mind, how does it function and how do the thought patterns develop within myself? When there are disturbing thoughts such as anxiety, fear and so forth, asking oneself 'what is causing them to manifest'?

Investigating the actual negative states of mind in this way and really looking into what they are and how they develop will help to diffuse those negative thoughts. As we identify them better we will be better able to avert and overcome them and adopt the positive states of mind. In our inner analysis we identify positive states of mind as well as what we call negative states of mind. So when we take initiative we will be able to clearly identify that there are certain states of mind, thought patterns or emotions that we can call positive because they are contributing factors or states of mind that enhance our sense of well-being, deep joy and happiness within.

Whereas there are other states of mind which as soon as they arise they are destructive and destroy our inner sense of well-being, happiness and contentment. To clearly recognise these, and to see that we have a choice to follow either, we can slowly familiarise ourselves with positive thought patterns, cultivating the positive emotions within ourselves. This is the way to go about it.

As mentioned earlier really doing this analysis of checking out what it is that is called the mind and what are its functions is really worthwhile. It has become quite popular to study the nature of the mind with even scientists taking a very keen interest in that. It is as if suddenly people are becoming awakened to the fact that there is a distinctive thing called a mind which is the initiator of our experiences and our feelings, and so this sort of investigation is being carried out

by asking how objects are perceived and how certain states of a mind arise in relation to the perceived objects. In other words, making that distinction between the subject and objects and how circumstances, or external objects, actually affect the mind.

It is significant that this sort of investigation, based on experiences, is being conducted these days and it is really good for us to pay attention to this factor since it has already been presented in the Buddhist teachings a long time ago about how the mind does in fact precede every action that we undertake. What that means is that whatever action or activity we engage in, or whatever intention we have, it is always preceded by a state of mind. So depending on the kind of state of mind or intention we have, the activity that follows is determined to be either a good activity or a negative activity. So that means that if the activity is preceded by a positive state of mind it ensures that the activity that is carried out will be a positive activity. If the activity is preceded by a negative state of mind naturally the activity will be a negative activity. This is how in a generalised way it is explained. To further investigate and look into how it actually works is something that is really significant for us to engage in.

So in brief, as mentioned extensively yesterday, the state of our mind is something that we can take the initiative to improve, and because we have the potential to improve our state of mind it is in our own interest that we actually take this initiative. The reason we need to improve the state of our mind is because we naturally have a wish for mental happiness and well-being. The good or positive state of mind is something that we need to identify, recognise and work towards improving, and this is the subject matter of the text that we are covering.

As mentioned previously, as we improve the positive states of mind within ourselves then that will help to increase the state of inner happiness within ourselves. This is in fact what all religious faiths would agree with. The essence of any religious faith is to provide

means and ways of how to improve our inner way of thinking and to develop positive attitudes as a way to improve our inner well-being and happiness. This is what all religions have in common. In comparison, ordinary worldly people are normally obsessed with engaging in activities to acquire the means for good external conditions and then having spent significant time and energy in acquiring good external conditions it seems that many reach a point, even in the height of their material success, where they start to realise for themselves that despite having a significant amount of wealth they are still somehow unhappy within.

This is something many people from ordinary walks of life have confided in me when I go out and about. When I go out I meet people from ordinary walks of life who share and confide in me that after years of acquiring wealth, doing business and so forth, they have obtained a certain amount of wealth but they don't feel that they have really obtained inner contentment and happiness. This is something that seems to be a common experience for those who, despite having acquired a sufficient amount of wealth, do not feel a sense of happiness. They see through their own experience that while they might not yet be able to see what the causes are, they lack that sense of well-being and inner happiness.

Now in contrast to that, religious people who spend their time in practice begin to see that the improvement of the positive states of mind leads to the inner happiness increasing further. This is something that practitioners would experience and here it might sound as though we are, from a religious point of view, boasting about what we are beginning to see and understand but this is true and factual. True practitioners definitely see that the more they develop their positive attitudes and positive qualities within their minds the more it actually contributes directly to having happier, more relaxed and calmer minds.

Therefore, as I regularly emphasise, though we do need to exert ourselves in time and energy in our outside environment of work acquiring means for our survival and to provide for our family and ourselves, however, while doing so, it is good for us to really pay attention to whether all of this time and energy spent outside is really the only means to derive genuine happiness for oneself. Is spending time and energy just acquiring wealth and external resources adequate, and will that in itself be sufficient to gain genuine happiness within oneself or not? This sort of questioning and analysing is worthwhile for one to do.

As I pointed out earlier it is the true religious practitioners from all religious faiths who begin to really see and experience the inner sense of well-being and happiness as they exert themselves to develop their inner qualities further. It is something that can be really witnessed. I normally also share the point, which may be a bit of a generalisation and not true for everyone, that we do find that many, many wealthy people who have spent their lives amassing so much external wealth come towards the end of their life and do not seem to have much inner sense of well-being. They do not feel totally happy and content within.

Conversely there would be practitioners who spend their time and energy acquiring inner qualities, even to the extent of seemingly neglecting the external conditions for their external comforts and thus later in their life they don't have many things to show outwardly in relation to wealth and possessions, but when it comes to inner well-being they really show a genuine sense of contentment and happiness.

This point is also something which was shared by the Dalai Lama in relation to one practitioner. He often shares this story about when he visited Spain several years ago and he had heard about a Christian monk who had been meditating in retreat for five years. The monk wanted to see the Dalai Lama so he came out of the retreat, and since the Dalai Lama was also keen to see him they met. The Dalai

Lama asked the monk what he was meditating on and how he was surviving in his retreat. Apparently he was living off very simple food like dried bread. He was living very simply during his time of retreat yet he seemed very exuberant and looked radiant. When the Dalai Lama asked him what he was meditating on his immediate response, in a very genuine and gentle tone, was that he was meditating on love. So the Dalai Lama was saying this was a person who was genuinely experiencing the positive effect of having meditated on love, and having spent all his time and energy in endeavouring and cultivating that within himself it clearly showed externally in his sense of joy, real contentment and happiness. This is an example, as the Dalai Lama also explains, that even with all the external hardships, avoiding lavish food and drink and so forth, cultivating the inner qualities definitely can be presented in a most joyous way. Whoever sees such a person also can be affected in a positive way. There are many examples we can relate to.

So how do we further develop that most positive state of mind which is a mind of genuine kindness, imbued in love and compassion and genuine concern for other's welfare and well-being? As mentioned previously we have the basis of such a positive state of mind within ourselves but we need to further strengthen that. One of the optimum means of how to train in developing that positive and kind mind is in this text that we are about to discuss here. The Eight Verses of Mind Training, composed by the great master Geshe Langri Thangpa, serves as a manual of instructions about how to further develop love and compassion.

In our tradition, this text is considered to be extremely profound. Because these instructions are so profound we may not be able to completely practise according to the instructions given here, but even relating to them and developing an inspiration to practise in this way would be really beneficial for us. So it is worthwhile for us to understand a bit about what is being explained.

This is an instruction specifically for those who are really inclined and determined to engage in ways to benefit other beings. There are different variations of the text and the verses of the text I am using are presented as various aspirations to be cultivated. So we can now relate to the first verse of the text which reads,

'With the determination to achieve the highest aim for the benefit of all sentient beings which surpass even the wish-fulfilling gem may I hold them dear at all times.'

The main essence of this first verse is that in comparison to oneself others are much more precious. Other beings are really supreme and really precious, so therefore this first verse is in relation to actually acknowledging and recognising how precious other beings are.

The reason why others are precious is actually in relation to oneself and we need to reason how other beings are extremely precious for one's own well-being. As mentioned previously, of course we need the external resources and good conditions for our survival but most importantly we need to develop our inner qualities. So in both cases we need to rely on other beings. For the external good conditions for our survival we can definitely relate to how it comes from others, since other beings are the ones that provide the external good conditions for us. Likewise, for developing our inner qualities for us to practise it is in relation to others. So, in brief, both external and internal qualities that we wish to develop for our well-being come from others.

What is being strongly encouraged here is that even in relation to one's own well-being we need to consider others extremely important and extremely precious. Because of that fact, even in relation to one's own well-being, initially, we need to adopt a mentality of embracing and cherishing others rather than neglecting others. This is in contrast to how we are normally habituated in thinking of ourselves.

We have placed the prime importance on our own well-being and happiness, cherishing oneself while neglecting others.

So the point which is being presented here is that we need to recognise that this mindset which cherishes only oneself and neglects others is a wrong attitude to hold. We need to recognise this as being an improper mindset which, in simple terms, is what we call the 'selfish attitude' of just focusing on one's own well-being and happiness, while ignoring the well-being of others.

What is being encouraged here is to change that attitude and way of thinking and begin to acknowledge that other beings are precious. We are encouraged to develop a mind of cherishing others, putting less importance on one's own needs and placing more importance on other's welfare and other's needs, thus really adopting an attitude of cherishing other sentient beings.

There are also other teachings encouraging us to think about it in a fair and logical way, explaining how just as we want to be happy so do others want to be happy, just as we do not wish to experience any kind of suffering so do others also not wish to experience suffering. Therefore it is not fair to focus only on our own well-being and neglect other's welfare. So even only thinking of fairness we can see that it is justified and it is fair to cherish other beings. It is in these ways that one starts to develop this mind-set and one takes the strong initiative of beginning to cherish other beings and to place less importance on one's own welfare.

When one is able to honestly acknowledge the shortcoming of focusing merely on one's own personal well-being, one will be able to then reason that just as one wants to be happy others also want to be happy and just as one does not wish to experience any kind of suffering others also do not wish to experience any kind of suffering.

Using oneself as an example we see that if we have this natural inclination of certain likes and dislikes and want to get rid of certain adverse circumstances, then these are exactly the same for others and we should consider other's needs as also important. Focusing merely on oneself is limited but when one focuses on others it is much more expansive. Coming out of the mindset which focuses merely on one's own needs and interests and replacing it with a mindset that takes other's needs into account, and thus pays attention to other's well-being, one actually contributes to one's own well-being.

If we were to take an immediate example in the context of a harmonious relationship between two people who are living together, they will be dependent on the mutual affection and genuine concern each has for the other. Thus if one takes the initiative to extend genuine concern for the other, taking the other's interest into account and genuinely trying to extend one's affection towards them, then the other would also acknowledge that. Of course the exception would be if they are mentally imbalanced and are not capable of recognising what is good and if they are in that kind of mental state of having an inability to recognise this. But for anyone who is of sound mind they would definitely recognise the genuine concern and affection that is shown towards them and likewise the natural response would be affection and warmth in return.

So it is in this way that if we were to take an example of a relationship of two people living together we see that if either person holds on to a mindset that their own interests are of more importance, not giving in to the other's concerns and interests, holding on to their own interests as being of primary importance that is the beginning of conflict, disharmony and disputes. We can see that even in relation to a space in your house there are those who may hold that certain areas are theirs claiming this is my space and no-one should enter my area.

That sort of attitude actually brings a state of mind of being very tight and that very notion of this is mine, this is my interest and my belongings, no-one else should use that, becomes limiting and brings about more tension within oneself rather than being liberating. Whereas in contrast to that if one has an attitude of sharing one's space and other things with others, then everyone can enjoy it; this allows the mind to become much more expansive. It is much more liberating to hold onto that sort of mindset and attitude.

Of course it is important not to misinterpret what is being presented here as this is not saying that one should neglect one's own welfare. Some people seem to get an incorrect understanding and think, 'oh, I guess I should not care of myself, I should not pay attention to my own interests'. In fact, what is being presented here is how to take care of oneself in an honest way, with a much broader perspective, and taking care of one's needs, not at the expense of others but in fact by benefiting others. In that way one's needs and one's fulfilment will be much greater. One needs to recognise that cherishing others is to one's ultimate benefit as well. While cherishing just oneself is very limited benefit for one's own well-being. If one extends genuine concern and love towards others it contributes to one's own happiness as well. We can start to think in this practical way.

Of course we begin with those who are near to ourselves such as our immediate relations and then we start to expand our scope. In this way as we practise and as we develop this understanding we will begin to change and develop a deep transformation within ourselves, where instead of taking one's own interests as being the prime importance we will start to take more interest in other's welfare and well-being. It is by seeing the disadvantages of cherishing just oneself and the benefits of cherishing others that one begins to develop that transformation and develop that mindset.

So the way for me to present the explanations here is to really relate to the practical approach and to try to give examples which would be most relevant in your life rather than giving traditional explanations. What is related here, in this verse, is that the value of other sentient beings surpass even a wish-fulfilling gem. The wish-fulfilling gem is a mythological gemstone and if you were to possess that it would fulfil all your worldly needs and wishes. As far as others are concerned the analogy here is that others are even more valuable than such a gem.

Again to think in a practical way, if you wish to be famous, even in a mundane sense, how can you become famous without depending on others? How could we be famous if we are just by ourselves? It is others who make us famous and who would consider us to be famous. If we wish to be rich, where do we get our wealth from? It is in relation to working for others or doing business with others and so forth that we amass wealth, so our wealth and fortune is also dependent on others. Likewise, even one's beauty, if one wants to be considered beautiful it is in comparison to other's beauty or the acknowledgement of others that one would consider oneself beautiful. If we go around thinking that we are beautiful but no-one claims that we are beautiful then there is no way for us to really know if we are beautiful or not. So these are practical ways and means of how we can see that whatever we desire, even in a worldly sense, we are definitely dependent on others. So this is the practical approach that we need to take.

The essential point being presented in this verse, is that we need to first of all, through using practical means and examples, begin to acknowledge that our own happiness is definitely dependent on others and thus others are really precious. When one begins to really feel that others are precious one begins to appreciate other living beings, and then based on that appreciation we begin to develop a concern for others. This is how we begin to practise a genuine sense of love and compassion towards others.

This step-by-step approach is a very systematic and practical way to lead us to developing a genuine sense of love and compassion for others. In the beginning it is based on appreciating others and when one extends that love and compassion towards others then that is the real basis for having a good relationship with others. Again bringing that back to our immediate relations such as with two people living together, it is based on that genuine concern that one has for the other that one develops a genuinely good relationship with them. In a relationship it is good to really think about what are the contributing factors for having a good, harmonious relationship and how to cultivate that. If there is tension and conflicts arising we need to investigate why they are arising, where are they coming from and how can one resolve that? So thinking in such ways will contribute to having a good relationship which goes beyond mutual attractions and develops into a genuine concern for each other. Based on the immediate relations we have then we can expand further thinking about how to conduct oneself when we go outside into society.

When we are out and about and meeting with other people how do we conduct ourselves? How can we be genuinely appealing to others? What kind of mannerisms and ways of speaking would be appealing to others and would contribute to others appreciating who we are? Here again we need to acknowledge that genuine good gestures in relation to others have to come from a genuine sense of concern for other's well-being within oneself, which is based on love and compassion for others. We can see that as we further develop love and compassion for others based on genuine concern then, because of our positive gestures, speech and our positive way of relating to others, naturally others will appreciate our company. Thus we can see that because of one's development of one's positive state of mind this contributes to good relationships with other people. So this is the practical approach we need to take.

To further understand this one line which says, 'other beings surpassing even a wish-fulfilling gem' we need to rely on further reasoning and

further contemplation. To further contemplate and reason why others are not only important but essential for our ultimate happiness we look from the broader perspective of the Buddhist path. Some of you might already be familiar with the term 'bodhicitta', translated as 'the mind of enlightenment' and meaning a state of mind which is based on love and compassion. It is the most altruistic state of mind which even goes beyond love and compassion and reaches a state of where one takes that personal responsibility of leading all beings out of suffering and to the state of ultimate happiness, which is the state of enlightenment or Buddhahood.

The mind of enlightenment is actually that mind which aspires to achieve enlightenment in order to benefit other beings. So this incredibly priceless precious state of mind is called bodhicitta in Sanskrit and can only be developed by relating to other sentient beings. We cannot possibly develop this precious mind, this incredibly profound state of mind called bodhicitta without depending on other sentient beings. There is no way because the very development of that mind is in relation to generating love and compassion towards other sentient beings and thinking about other sentient beings' welfare. So this incredibly powerful, profound and precious mind is called bodhicitta or the mind of enlightenment, and when we develop this we are actually on a definite path leading to enlightenment.

This precious mind that we develop is dependent on other sentient beings. To develop that state of mind of bodhicitta or the mind of enlightenment, the actual practices involved become a cause to achieve enlightenment. These practices are engaging in 'The Six Perfections' of which the first three are generosity, morality and patience. These profound practices which are a cause for one's enlightenment, are practised only in dependence on other sentient beings. When we practise generosity it is in relation to others and then we derive the merit or the benefit of that practice. Without the others as objects to be generous towards we cannot practise generosity.

Likewise, with morality or ethics the practices are also dependent on other beings. Then finally when we achieve that ultimate state of enlightenment, which is the ultimate state of happiness for oneself, and in relation to benefiting others we achieve the complete means, we are completely equipped then to be able to benefit others. That state of enlightenment, which is obtained at the final stage of following the righteous path, is achieved in relation to having engaged in practices benefiting other sentient beings.

Thus as it is mentioned in the Buddhist teachings sentient beings are most important for one's ultimate well-being. In the beginning of our practice we need to relate to the welfare of other beings. During the middle of our practice and as well as when we reach the ultimate state of enlightenment, our very purpose is to serve other beings. So others are essential and important for us in all three stages of beginning, middle and end. It is in this way that we can now relate to this analogy as not being far-fetched and seeing it is completely reasonable to use the analogy that sentient beings are even greater than the wish-fulfilling gem. This is how we can begin to understand that.

Relating to the explanation that sentient beings surpass even the wish-fulfilling gem, the mythological wish-fulfilling gem is an object, like a precious stone perhaps, which at best can provide us some means for our welfare now. So even a wish-fulfilling gem or an actual precious stone has limitations. What I relate in my own account of my escape from Tibet is that even if you have a precious stone, without others to feed you and give you clothes and so forth it will not be of much help. So sentient beings provide not only temporary benefits but also the help or benefit which will lead us to our ultimate goal of reaching enlightenment. Since becoming a Buddha is dependent on others that is ultimately the reason why sentient beings surpass even a wish-fulfilling jewel.

Now again it is good to really relate to the path, so here what the verse is mentioning is that one develops 'the determination to achieve the highest benefit for all beings who surpass the wish-fulfilling gem and may I hold them dear at all times'. So the emphasis here is that by recognising that others are extremely precious one extends one's practice of cherishing others and holding them dear. To benefit others one needs to hold them dear and that is the main connection that we need to recognise.

Thus again it is good for us to relate to practical examples such as my own experiences when I was escaping from Tibet with others. Along the escape route there would be times when we were going into barren land where there was no-one to be seen, not even animals, so even if we did have some money with us there was no way that we could spend it. How could we get food without anyone to provide it? If in the complete wilderness there were some wild animals then of course those who were escaping with us who were not monks and didn't have the vow could possibly hunt the animals and eat their flesh, but of course that would clearly mean that the other creatures are providing us with the means for our survival. So when there are no others, neither animals nor humans, there is nothing that can help us for our survival.

Really to provide us with our means for survival such as food and clothing it was only when we started to reach villages and started to be around other people that they provided us with meals. Then, even if we didn't have any money, because of our plight, they were naturally spontaneously generous to us and gave us food, drink and clothing. So that is how through my own experience in the extreme conditions of hardship in our escape from Tibet that the recognition of others being really extremely kind and precious dawned upon me in that way.

So it is in these ways that we need to think about how everything that we have now is really dependent on the kindness of others. When we

think about it in these practical ways then it dawns upon us more and more clearly how others are extremely dear and that we need to extend a sense of genuine concern and thus practise love and compassion towards others.

The essence of the meaning of this verse is that by recognising and understanding that others are dear and precious we take the initiative to repay that kindness and hold them extremely dear in our heart, cherishing them and thinking about their interests and so forth. So in a practical way what I try to share with others is something that I try to apply in my own practice every day. When I wake up and do my practice this is how I begin my practice and thus I feel it would be good to share it with you, and something that I would strongly encourage you also to try to pay attention to.

Every morning that you wake up, before you engage in any other activity, if you can just contemplate a few moments on this day thinking for today I will do my utmost to extend my help towards others and bring about benefit and happiness for others. Then the next resolve is that at the very least may I definitely not engage in ways that will harm or hurt others. So if one can actually really contemplate on this and make a determination that one would practise in this way then that will help one to shape the day. Of course there would be occasions where, again through our habituation, we might find ourselves uncontrollably doing things to harm others, saying things that are not appropriate or hurting others in many other ways, but if we can recognise that afterwards and think, oh, that was very unfortunate that I again was compelled in doing things and saying things which hurt others. So with that recognition when we develop a sense of regret of having done deeds which were hurtful and harmful to others, that then becomes a practice and means to purify the negative actions one has done.

It is in this way that we start to improve. When we find ourselves again committing negative deeds we develop a sense of regret and purify our

negative deeds and we try again to adopt positive deeds. It is in this way that accumulatively we begin to see our improvement take place day-by-day.

It is really useful for us to adopt practical approaches and positive attitudes even in the face of difficulties and hardships and when everything seems to be quite grim to not lose hope and to keep a far-sighted view. Again to relate my own experience in an account of my escape from Tibet that was notably the most difficult time in my life. Along with many other Tibetans I escaped in 1959. We were all in small groups and I was with a group escaping along the route and there were times when everything seemed really grim and it was easy to lose hope. To relate to a particular remark that someone had made, there was an elder monk who later mentioned to me that he was lamenting about how we are now in a very difficult situation where our food is running out. We are not sure when we are going to reach the land where we are escaping to, there was no-one who knew exactly how long it would take, so this older monk was getting quite concerned about the desperate situation.

And then the older monk said that one of the comments made by a junior monk was very helpful for his mind. The junior monk had said that one of the students among the group was saying, 'oh, don't worry elder, don't worry too much, eventually we will definitely reach a place where there are people, so when we reach that place where there are people we will be able to get food, what they are eating. I'm sure whatever food they are eating we will also get some part of that, we will be able to eat what they eat as well, so even if our food is running out now we shouldn't worry too much about it. Whatever they are wearing, we will be able to get similar clothing'.

Of course this was with the prospect that we would not be able to return to where we were escaping from and the real concern was we were running out of food, we had no clothing, no money and no shelter

so what would happen and where will we reach? So in response to that the younger monk was saying, don't worry, whatever the others who are in the new country that we are coming to get we will also get. He said that was very helpful to broaden his perspective a little bit and lessen the anxiety in his mind.

And true enough the new country that we reached was India and we were given the food that people eat in India, rice and dhal. The government took the initiative to feed us and clothe us, so definitely we were taken care of. However, there was a lot of tragedy for a lot who were not too familiar with that kind of food. Even when food was provided they were not able to cook that kind of food and not knowing how to use the new foodstuff many actually started getting diarrhoea. In Tibet they would have tsampa so maybe they were eating pilaf flour and getting diarrhoea and so forth and many Tibetans actually got sick and also perished in that way.

In relation to the text we may seem to have covered only one verse, which of course we only had time for, but my attempt was knowing that I wouldn't be able to cover the exhaustive explanation of all of the verses in such a short session I spent a bit of time just trying to give an overview of the main essential points. In relation to the text we might have covered only one verse, but hopefully you have got an idea of what it is about and carry something which you can put into use.

I would like to acknowledge that you paid such great attention to what I was trying to share and I really appreciate that so I want to thank you for that.

So again just on a last note, what I regularly share, on whatever occasion it may be and whoever we might be in the company of, the advice that it will be really good to try to adopt an attitude of considering others as our real true friends. When we have a genuine sense of considering others as a friend, regardless of whether we have previously met them or not, and

actually approach others with the sense, from our side, of seeing an old friend or companion, then that will naturally bring a sense of warmth rather than feeling alienated from others. We would actually feel close to them and that sense of closeness begins from our own attitude. If we adopt an attitude that 'here I'm seeing another friend, an old friend, an old associate', with that sort of sense of warmth then the occasion, whatever it may be, will be a good gathering which is joyous and a gathering where one derives some sense of ease and happiness as well. So even to the extent that it may be a temporary sense of enjoyment and happiness it will be a worthwhile gathering. I try to adopt that myself in my life and I strongly encourage you to also try to adopt that attitude which I feel would be really useful and beneficial.

Again, the arrangements that have been made for our coming here in relation to the venues and our place where we stay were all arranged very, very nicely so I really thank everyone for that. The place where we were staying was very luxurious. It was very nice and very comfortable so thank you so much. Then also it is my understanding that this venue was offered free of charge so whether the individual is here or not I'd really like to extend my appreciation and thanks for that generosity. It is definitely a great gesture of kindness so we really appreciate that.

This could be another practical example of how, with a genuine sense of kindness and concern for others, we can extend practical benefits. The individual who let us use these premises would have expenses such as rent, utilities and other facilities which have been used, but from her side offering with the intention it will help and benefit others is definitely a great gesture of kindness.

So we can do the dedication.

When I first came to Australia as a teacher there was a time I was initially invited for and when that certain time was up the Institute where I am now requested for me to stay on and continue as a teacher. They were

saying, we will help and definitely ensure that you stay with us. We will apply for a passport and for you to get permanent residency and all of that. When the request was made to me my response was then, well, I'm happy to stay and teach because whether I go back to India or if you ask me to stay here that is my job, to teach and share what I have learnt. However one condition is that you cannot discipline me or make rules for me, I need to have the liberty to teach as I feel fitting, that is my condition, so if you are happy with that then I can continue to stay.

Now of course if you are happy and I'm happy that you comply with that condition then I will continue to stay because mutually we are both happy, but if you're happy and I'm not happy about a situation then I need to take the liberty of leaving, but even if I'm happy but you are not happy that doesn't serve the purpose, I would also consider leaving, but in the event that we are both mutually happy in the way that I teach and conduct the teachings then definitely I can stay.

So to share the story, then because it was the agreement that I would stay on I went to the passport office to make the application or get the citizenship test. The first time we went to the citizenship test office I was taken by Alan and he didn't seem to have much idea about what takes place because he was born here. I was given a piece of paper and I was told to read that and to describe or give some explanation on it, and I of course didn't know how to read English and couldn't really make sense of that. Alan didn't seem to really know what to do and then the examiner there said, could you come back next week maybe because there is also no translator. It seems that normally a translator or interpreter could be provided but maybe there was no Tibetan interpreter at that time so the officer was saying maybe I could come back next week. So when I came back to the Centre I announced that I don't think I should sit for this citizenship test and make a passport and they were saying, 'why, why is that so?' I said, 'because you've got to know the language, that seems to be the condition and I don't know English. I don't know the language so maybe I'm not qualified'.

Apparently someone from the Centre had sent a message to the officer saying that they had made a grave mistake not to consider me for citizenship because this is a person who we really need to stay to help us and conduct the Buddhist teachings and for you to not have considered offering him citizenship is a grave mistake. So apparently after that letter was sent a reply was sent saying for me to come back again at a certain time and then the officer seemed to be very courteous and smiling.

That was my first glimpse of seeing how Australia is a very considerate and kind nation. Even when I first came I was told that in relation to me getting my visa there will be no problem at all and indeed there was no problem in getting a visa initially to come here. In India Tibetan refugees are issued with what is called an identity certificate which is a yellow sort of book and that somehow was lost, so I didn't even have that, but before travelling from India a temporary ID card was made for me to travel here. So the embassy in Australia actually provided that special ID card which served as an ID card to use wherever I could travel to Australia. I've been told that nowadays they don't seem to provide that.

Everything worked so well and even despite me saying that maybe I'm not going to stay, everything turned out so smoothly and all the conditions for me to stay here manifested so easily that I feel that there must be some sort of strong connection with Australia. I must have had some connection in the past to have been able to comply and stay.

After becoming a citizen, of course when you reach a certain age like sixty-five, you can get the pension, but I didn't take the pension for about a year and then I was told that it would be good to accept the pension because that is something I am entitled to. So again I had to go to an office to report and had to do some paperwork. When I went to this office to do the paperwork the officer actually came out to receive me and the first word he said when he saw me was Tashi Delek, which is a greeting in Tibetan. So this individual happened to be someone who had come to some of my teachings previously, and he was following the

Tibetan Buddhist tradition called the Kagyu tradition, but he said that he had come to some of my talks.

At that time, I had my previous translator with me who was Venerable Fedor. When I went in an officer looked at my papers and said, 'everything is in order and there is no dispute with my entitlement, everything is fine and all the requirements of how long you have to be in Australia, everything fits in accordance to your entitlements so there is no extra assistance I need to provide for you because in relation to entitlement everything is in place'. So Fedor also was commenting that, 'oh, Geshela everything went so easy for you'. Even when we came to the car-park there were already two people who were saying hello to me and they seemed to know me, so Fedor was even saying, 'how come Geshela seems to know people everywhere?'

Sorry to take a little bit more time relating my stories to you but the main thing we need to protect ourselves from is not displaying one's qualities, saying I've got such knowledge and qualities and so forth. In relating about actual incidents and accounts that have happened and so forth I don't think there is harm in sharing that, but the main thing we need to be mindful of is not proclaiming one's qualities.



The Six Perfections

Day 1, 2014



Please adopt a comfortable and relaxed posture. I'd like to again express my appreciation to the Warrnambool Buddhist Group for inviting me here. I am not saying that it's something which is of personal benefit for me but I'm happy and I appreciate it. What I show appreciation for is your very kind gesture in inviting me so that something meaningful can be exchanged. Because of that kind gesture it is appropriate that I show my appreciation.

Of course this kind gesture stems from a wish to help and benefit others. It is your intention when you invite me that maybe something significant could be shared that could be useful for others. It is because of that expectation that I also come here with the intention that whatever I am able to share with you may serve the purpose of benefiting yourselves and others. So it is this mutual good intention that we have, which actually makes our gathering worthwhile.

Again, because of the good intention from your side in inviting me with the hope it could help others more extensively, and the good intention from my side that I am coming here with the hope I may be able to share something significant that could benefit others, we have this very good

and positive motivation that according to the Buddha's teaching is a means to accumulate positive merit.

Indeed, relating to our good intentions and a good state of mind, I regularly share in my teachings that it is significant that we first of all investigate who we are as individuals and what this encompasses. Undoubtedly we all have a physical body and then we also have a mind, a cognitive mind, which encompasses our thinking processes, feelings, emotions and so forth. We've got a body and a mind, and it is in relation to this body and mind that there is also a notion of an individual self, an identity we call 'me' or 'I'. This notion of an individual 'I' comes in relationship with our body and mind.

Thus with the notion of an individual 'I', when we consider what it is that this 'I' instinctively wishes for, we all understand that there is a natural wish for the 'I' to experience well-being and happiness, and not to experience any kind of misery or suffering. This is something natural that we all have. This instinctive inclination or wish for happiness and not wanting to experience any suffering, is true by the sheer fact that there is an individual self. There is no other reason besides the fact there is an individual being who has experiences and naturally wants to experience well-being and does not want to experience any misery.

Since we have this natural inclination that we have no qualms about, we can all agree that no matter where we come from and no matter who we are, we have this natural tendency as human beings. Because of this fact, if we were to summarise our main individual responsibility as a human being, what would that main responsibility be? It would be to acquire the means and methods for experiencing well-being and happiness and finding methods to remove any kind of misery and suffering from ourselves. This is a responsibility we all need to have.

Having mentioned that we have that responsibility by the sheer fact that we are humans, now the question is whether we have the ability to

acquire the means for our own happiness and remove those conditions for suffering? Do we have the means to achieve that? The answer to that question, again from Buddhadharma, is that we definitely have this ability. Because we are human beings we are naturally born with the gift and ability of acquiring the good conditions for our happiness and to remove suffering.

This ability comes with the very meaning of the word in Sanskrit for human being, which is 'puruka'. The literal meaning of 'puruka' is 'to have potential', thus as human beings we all have the potential. Knowing that we wish to acquire happiness and remove suffering, we can explore a little bit further into how we experience happiness and suffering. These are experienced on two levels, either physically or mentally. Therefore, when we experience well-being and happiness it can be experienced either on a physical level or a mental level. Likewise, with misery or suffering it can be experienced on a physical level and on a mental level.

The means to acquire the good conditions for physical and mental happiness is none other than through physical and mental training. We have to train ourselves how to acquire physical well-being and happiness and remove those conditions for suffering. Likewise, on the mental level the means to acquire mental happiness and remove mental suffering is through our mental training. Both require learning and training. The reason why it requires learning and training is because both happiness and suffering depend on causes. That means that both suffering and happiness do not randomly occur without any causes or conditions. It is not as if suddenly without any reason one experiences either happiness or suffering, but rather the reality is that each experience of happiness or suffering depends on its particular causes and conditions.

In relation to what those causes and conditions are, we can summarise what religious traditions say. There are many kinds of religions but if we were to summarise them into two categories, there is one category of religion that says one's happiness and suffering comes from a creator

or God and all that everyone experiences comes from a creator, and then another set of religious beliefs that explain that happiness and suffering are actually created by one's own mind. It is worthwhile for us to consider this because we are normally curious and we want to know how and why things happen. We all experience either happiness or suffering so it is natural for us to want to know how and why we experience happiness or suffering. It is good for us to relate to the explanations given in the different spiritual traditions and then try to get a better understanding to see if it relates to us.

The explanations from particular spiritual traditions have a positive effect upon those who adhere to them. For those who have a strong belief in God it does help them with their understanding that everything has a purpose and everything one experiences, good or bad, comes from the creator God. That explanation brings about a sense of solace for many. Such an explanation suits their mind to be able to accept things. Whereas in other traditions such as Buddhism it is explained that all experiences come from either positive karma or negative karma which specifically relates to the creation of one's own mind. The conviction that everything is not randomly occurring but comes from its own particular positive or negative causes gives solace and an understanding to abide by.

Of course in those traditions which believe in a creator God, such as Christianity, those who really adhere to that strong conviction and belief in God, find it helps their mind to get solace and acceptance. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama stresses in his teachings when he talks about different religions and the positive effect they have upon people, those who adhere to these traditions having a true belief and a sound faith in God definitely benefit greatly.

Again to relate the significance of having a profound understanding of how each religious tradition has a positive effect, when His Holiness the Dalai Lama stresses how adhering to beliefs such as believing in the

creator God has a positive effect upon those who adhere to that system, he is explaining not to those who already believe in the creator God. There would be no purpose for him to mention that for those who already believe in God, rather he is actually presenting this to Buddhist monks, in a gathering of over 22,000 Buddhist monks and other Tibetan Buddhist followers. He is mentioning these positive good qualities of different traditions amongst those who are already followers of Buddhism and he then emphasises that this understanding of how different religions have a positive effect upon those who adhere to that religion is very important because it will help one to respect other religions.

When we respect the other religion because it has a profound benefit for others then naturally that sense of hostility against that religion will not be there. That is how religious harmony can develop in the world and as His Holiness further emphasises the situation of the world would become much better and much more peaceful if religions could all have a better understanding amongst each other and work together harmoniously. That could be of so much benefit to the world and that is why he expresses this in a Buddhist gathering.

Now going back to the point that I explained from our tradition, something that we can actually understand and accept is that we need the right conditions to have certain favourable conditions in relation to our experiences. For our physical well-being we need to have the right physical conditions to bring about that physical well-being and then likewise in order to have mental well-being we need to have the right conditions there to experience mental well-being.

The main point in relation to the favourable conditions for our physical well-being is that they are acquired through our worldly knowledge. When we get a good education and good schooling, all of that will provide the basic good conditions for our physical well-being such that one is then able to earn enough to be able to feed oneself adequately, clothe oneself adequately, get shelter and all other basic needs for our

physical maintenance and well-being. Thus in summary we can say that the worldly knowledge we gain from a normal education system provides those means. Having access to these resources of a good education and so forth is really quite a remarkable thing. We need to acknowledge that it is really remarkable that we live in a country where there is a good education system and then having received a good education being able to access the means to get work and be able to sustain oneself adequately. We see that here one is not deprived of those good conditions, but of course if one doesn't utilise or take advantage of those good conditions then it wouldn't work towards one's benefit. If one does utilise and take advantage of them, we can see it is really remarkable.

In relation to one's adequate good conditions, even when all of those good conditions are present one might find that one is still not really satisfied or happy. First of all, in relation to one's happiness what we need to take into account here is that when someone asks us the question, 'Are you happy?' Where do we look for that happiness? How do we respond to that question? Do we look at our house and if it is a grand house say, 'Oh, I'm happy because of my big house' or, 'I'm happy because of the friends that I have?' Those are the things that one is least likely to relate to immediately, rather what one relates to is whether we are happy or whether we are well. If we are well, do we point to these external factors to indicate whether we are well or not? No, we do not, and actually what we focus on and what we relate to is the condition of our physical body and the condition of our mind, in other words we relate to ourselves and our own well-being. Therefore, whether we are well or not doesn't depend on the external factors as much as it depends on the personal conditions of our body and mind.

Having mentioned the general conditions we need for our physical well-being and mental well-being, in relation to physical well-being, having adequate resources would be a condition for our physical well-being. Even with all of those favourable, adequate external resources, do they contribute to our mental well-being? This is where the question may arise

as to what our actual, real mental well-being primarily depends upon. So it is clear that having a good house, having a good job and having many friends is in itself not sufficient to gain what we call mental happiness. When all of the external conditions are adequate and an individual still lacks a sense of inner well-being, inner satisfaction, peace and happiness in their mind then what that actually indicates is that there are some inner conditions missing. While all the external conditions are there still the inner conditions for mental happiness might be lacking. This is where religion or spirituality comes in and each religious tradition or spirituality offers methods and ways to gain the inner conditions for mental well-being and happiness.

We may ask what are these inner conditions for our mental well-being and happiness? In summary the inner conditions are having proper ways of thinking and having proper attitudes in one's mind. The inner conditions depend on the positive, constructive thinking in one's mind. I normally summarise that our physical well-being clearly relates to physical health and likewise mental well-being relates to mental health, we need to take mental health into consideration.

Since our well-being is related to our physical well-being and our mental well-being we need to acquire both physical and mental health. To achieve this, we need to apply the means to protect our physical health as well as our mental health. There are various means of how to promote and protect one's physical health as well as means and ways to promote and protect our mental health. Thus we need to take that responsibility ourselves, and the reason for that is because our physical and mental well-being is something that is experienced entirely by ourselves. We cannot share it with others. We may be able to share our house, our clothing, food and so forth but in relation to our physical health it is only ourselves who experience that. If there is ill-health within ourselves that also has to be experienced solely by ourselves. No matter how many loved ones we have they cannot share our physical ailments or take them away from us. Likewise, if we have good health we cannot give it to others no matter

how much we love them. The same with our mental well-being, if we are experiencing an elated sense of joy and happiness it can be viewed by others to some degree but we cannot actually share it or give that happiness and joy to them. Similarly, we cannot share our suffering, if we are experiencing some mental agony and suffering that is something we cannot share with others. Therefore, what is actually indicated here is that because it is a personal experience we need to take the initiative to protect that point of view to well-being and remove those which are detrimental to our well-being.

Based on these reasons I try to encourage others, particularly the young ones, to take the initiative to take care of both their physical and mental well-being. In relation to physical well-being we need to protect our health. All of you already know very well that we need to be mindful and careful not to consume things which might be detrimental to our health, such as certain kinds of food and drink. There are certain things we need to avoid as a way to protect our health. And then with those foods which help to nourish and sustain us and are helpful to our health, we need to take the initiative to consume those and so it is in this way that we protect our physical health.

It would really be a shame if while there may be no preconditions or ailments in our body we were to destroy our own health because of not being mindful and careful of what we eat and drink and so forth. That would be a real pity because it would be a situation where we are destroying our own good health, since no one else is affecting us or destroying it for us we need to take that initiative. As I share with the young ones I try to encourage them to be mindful of that.

Likewise, with our mind, what we need is a clear mind. Whatever conditions that hinder and obstruct a clear mind we need to try to avoid. We can see the relationship between our physical body and our mind here as well, so those conditions which can help to promote a clear mind are things that we need to adopt. That is because we all have aspirations

in life and we all want to achieve something in life. Whatever it is that we wish to achieve and aspire towards we have to do that with a sound body and a sound mind. Without a healthy body and a healthy, clear mind we cannot possibly achieve what we set out to do for ourselves. So therefore again the emphasis is to really be mindful and take care of one's physical health as well as one's mental health.

In relation to mental happiness we can look a little bit into how we might promote and develop mental happiness, that is in direct relationship with understanding what actually affects our mental happiness, what obstructs our mental happiness and what causes us to have distress and agony in our mind. In order to understand that, first of all we need to honestly look into ourselves and acknowledge that we may allow ourselves to have so many different random thoughts, what we call in Tibetan 'superstitious thoughts'. Superstitious here meaning unnecessary and excessive worries, anxieties and fears. We allow our mind to dwell on them and to keep that going in our mind. This is something that we need to acknowledge to ourselves first.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama shares how baseless fears and superstition could arise and affect one, by relating a story of when he was very young. He would run around the Potala Palace, which is quite large, and his attendants would sometimes want to prevent him going into certain rooms or certain areas where there might be dangerous objects or he might fall down and hurt himself, so in order to protect him, his attendants would say, 'Oh don't go in there, there are ghosts in there'. So he said as a young child he would actually feel a bit of fear and be hesitant, but he says now in hindsight that of course there are no ghosts in the Potala Palace. When we relate to many of our experiences of fears and so forth, especially what we would call irrational fears, we can see that those fears were related to some sort of superstitious mind.

I can share another kind of superstitious doubt that some people may have in relation to couples living together. If your partner goes out to

work regularly and comes back at a certain time, for example around five o'clock, and one particular day they don't come back until a little after five, one starts thinking, 'now, where could they have gone?' Then actually some doubts may arise like wondering if they have gone off to see someone else.

When we relate to a lot of the fears and anxieties that we experience throughout life and really pay attention we might detect and notice for ourselves that a lot of these fears and anxieties are not really based on factual realities, but on our mind conjuring up and thinking about the worst case scenario. That is really what happens a lot of the time. Relating back to the main point about our well-being, even if all the physical external good conditions enable the body to relax in these comforts, if the mind is not relaxed and does not feel calm, then that would really be a pity because while you have all those physical comforts you are unable to relax.

If it were only physical comforts that were needed for one's relaxation then one would have all of that, but if the mind is not settled and calm that would really be a pity. Therefore, we really need to take the initiative and take responsibility for ourselves. While working towards having good external conditions we need to also work on developing the inner conditions for our genuine mental relaxation and genuine mental well-being. It is when we have that combination that we can say we have true well-being.

Thus what we need to be working towards is to achieve a state where we have both adequate conditions to be physically relaxed and also adequate training in our minds so that we are able to relax mentally as well. When we have both conditions on the physical level as well as the mental level intact then that individual who experiences that unity of physical and mental well-being will be able to experience a genuine sense of happiness in relation to having a peaceful mind. A peaceful mind comes through having this combination of adequate physical conditions as well as a

genuinely relaxed state of mind. When we can achieve that state where we are, to a certain degree, able to relax physically and mentally having a genuine sense of calmness in our mind then that would be the true sense of wellness.

Again going back to the advice I share with the younger generation, which is really important because of their need to have proper guidelines and so forth. For those with whom I am acquainted and with whom I am able to share, I openly share my suggestions for them to take the initiative to study well. It is important to have a good education and because of a good education and studying well one will be able to get work and one will be able to save some money. Saving money is also important, and rather than just squandering one's money on having fun one should actually take the initiative to save a bit of money.

While engaging in the normal education system and then getting a good job and saving some money they should also, at the same time, be trying to pay some attention to their inner state of mind and the conditions for their mental well-being. With that combination of saving a bit of money as well as adopting some trainings to save some inner good conditions for themselves, then while they have to exert some time, energy and effort in doing that, later in their lives when they reach the age of sixty or seventy they can really relax and will have a really good time then.

Therefore, as mentioned earlier, I have taken the initiative to share with some young people the advice that having the right means now in the prime of their youth to access both physical training as well as mental training they can do both at the same time. Some of those youngsters whom I have shared with over the years are now relating to me that they have taken the initiative and what I shared has been really meaningful. Also, I've told some younger ones that now is the time for them to spend more time getting a good education and not to worry too much about coming to my teachings. They can do that slowly but right now they should pay attention to their education. And so it is

really with a genuine concern for their livelihood and their well-being that I share that and when they take that initiative they find that it is helpful and useful for their lives.

The main topic that we need to be concerned with here is how to adopt and acquire the conditions for a genuinely relaxed mind. While we may all have some means of relaxing physically how do we genuinely relax the mind? Amongst all the different techniques that there may be to relax the mind one of the most effective techniques in our tradition is what we call meditation.

So now to explain a bit about the meditation technique. First of all, as mentioned earlier, it is one of the most supreme techniques one can use to acquire a genuinely relaxed state of mind. Relating to the contrast between a relaxed mind and a very busy mind, it is because of a busy or hyper-active mind that one experiences turmoil in the mind. Anxieties, fears, worries and depression and so forth all come from a hyper-active mind which is dispersed in every direction. An analogy to explain this would be if we had a strong river flowing quite forcefully from a certain source which becomes diverted in many different directions, losing that force and becoming small streams which may not be able to utilise the energy of that strong force. Whereas if the strong flow of the river was to be targeted or focused on one area, then that strong force of the water could be used to produce some strong energy which could then be utilised properly.

It is like that with our mind. We do have that great potential in our mind but when our mind's focus is dispersed in every direction and on a lot of meaningless distractions we lose that sense of strength of our mind and we are not able to utilise the full potential of our mind. Therefore, what the meditation technique initially teaches and trains us in is how to bring our full potential and focus onto a chosen and appropriate object. That training in itself is the training of how to utilise the full potential of our mind. Thus it is not a simple technique to be under-estimated. Through

training and the practice of this technique of focusing our mind on an object we can make great achievements.

Of course when we relate to the mind there are so many different aspects or so many different facets to the mind. One quality we have in the mind is intelligence or what we call wisdom, which comes from insight. We all have the ability to have wisdom or insight so we need to utilise that. Having presented this information about the meditation technique and how it actually helps us counteract an otherwise very busy, hyperactive and completely distracted mind, and how it actually contains that, then with that information we can use our own intelligence and our own wisdom to think about it and analyse that.

To think about it in relation to our own experience we can ask ourselves whether it is true that our mind loses its potential, energy and focus when it is dispersed in every direction and caught up in these different, meaningless thoughts and distractions. If we can acknowledge that and see that it is true, then we are able to see the disadvantage of a distracted mind. If we look into our own state of mind with our experience of applying this training of meditation, or otherwise from our limited previous experience, we know our mind is much more contained, has much more focused energy and is not dispersed in every direction.

We can see that with training in the meditation technique along with that focused mind we get a clarity of mind. With that focus and clear mind, we see that meditation is beneficial and something useful and productive for ourselves. Therefore, it is our wisdom and intelligence which discerns what is an advantage and what is a disadvantage for ourselves. Through our wisdom we will be able to acknowledge that.

Of course what I am attempting to relate here, I feel, is not something very obscure or very difficult for you to grasp or understand. In simple terms what I want to share again is that we should pay attention to how our minds are very easily influenced by the objects that we interact with.

When we interact with certain objects, whether there is actual direct interaction or it is a thought or memory of a certain object, we all know it can immediately bring distress to our mind making us feel uncomfortable.

For example, the moment we think about something or encounter a certain kind of object or a person it can bring us distress whereas with certain other objects or thoughts it can bring about a sense of well-being and ease in our mind. When we talk about objects here it can be thoughts, memories or actual physical objects. When we recognise that while we might find it difficult to completely avoid interacting with certain kinds of objects, we can actually acknowledge that interacting with these objects is distressful and does cause agitation to the mind. If we can acknowledge this, then at least we have taken the initiative to accept that for ourselves and then slowly we can take measures to avoid interacting with those objects.

The training in meditation basically is giving us that ability. The more trained we are in meditation practice the more likely we are able to restrain ourselves from objects that cause us distress. Someone who does not have any mental training might not even be able to acknowledge or recognise the connection or relationship between the distracting object and the distress in their mind. Even if they did notice that, they might not be able to apply any restraint. Whatever level we might be at individually, we all would perhaps acknowledge that it is hard to completely avoid paying attention to or interacting with distracting objects.

However, when we recognise that we all have the ability to restrain ourselves we can control the degree to which we allow ourselves to interact with the object. To what degree we are able to control that is dependent upon the training of our mind and our meditation. Therefore, that is something that we need to acknowledge and relate to ourselves in adopting this training. Thus, whether we have happiness or not is dependent on how we train our mind to interact with objects that we face in our lives.

Applying this method of training in meditation as a way to gain happiness is something which is definitely feasible. Even though I cannot claim that I have great experience of meditation, with whatever experience I have gained throughout my life and attempting to meditate myself, I can definitely vouch for the fact that if one does apply the meditation technique we derive the happiness not just in the future but right now in our lives. That we are definitely able to achieve some happiness in our everyday lives is something I can share with confidence. This is not a partial truth that I'm sharing with you, it is a definitely real, untainted truth.

I have many stories and incidences to share about the benefits of meditation, however just to share one brief story about an individual whose mother was over 90, maybe 92 years old, who was interested in meditation and had taken the initiative to have practised a bit in her life. I was talking to this individual and when I asked how his mother was, he immediately responded that she'd had an accident and had been hospitalised with a broken bone, but actually she was very calm and peaceful and even after coming back home from the hospital she was very calm and peaceful. So this individual was telling me that even though he hadn't practised much meditation himself, he was really acknowledging the positive benefit of meditation in relation to his own mum being quite calm and taking things in her stride even when these conditions happened. So this is definitely seeing the positive benefit.

We can now take some time for meditation. However, before we do that another significant point that I would like to share is that the positive mind within ourselves is something which we can train ourselves in. Positive states of mind and positive attitudes are things that we can develop within, we all carry that potential. Having developed them we will have that positive state of mind and a lot of positive qualities and we need to really acknowledge that and consider that as our real companion and our real friend. It is an unfailing friend and companion because wherever we go we carry our mind with us.

We always travel with our mind and we cannot leave our mind behind. Because we carry our mind wherever we go, if we ensure that we have a positive state of mind and positive attitudes in our mind then that is something that can assist us in whatever we do. Whether we are in a working environment or interacting with relatives, friends, children or others and wherever we may go whether we are sitting or standing or walking about, if we can always be constantly vigilant of maintaining a positive attitude and positive frame of mind then that is something that will always assist us. Because it is an unfailing companion this will help us in both difficult times and in good times. We need not feel that we are without companionship when we can relate to those positive qualities within ourselves. This is something that I want to emphasise here as something that we all need to try to remember in our lives.

So having mentioned that, we can now actually take some time for meditation. The reason we adopt a posture which is both upright and comfortable is because if we have a posture which causes us a little bit of pain then our mind will not be able to focus well and our attention will go there thus we need to have a relaxed posture. Therefore, for those who may find it difficult to sit in a crossed-legged posture due to pains in the knees and aches and so forth it is better to sit on a chair.

Having adopted a comfortable and attentive posture we then make sure we have a clear state of mind. Because our meditation is done on a mental level in conjunction with a relaxed body we need to take the initiative that for the next few minutes we will give this very significant training our full attention and our full heart. Therefore, because we have acknowledged that it is a distracted mind that brings about distress within ourselves and our fears, anxieties and depression all come from a distracted mind, what we need to do first of all is take the initiative to bring our focus inward, not allowing our mind to disperse in every direction or become distracted. Thus having brought our focus within, we place it upon an appropriate object to anchor our mind.

What we call the meditation object is any appropriate object which anchors our mind to be fixated on that object. Normally the object we adopt to focus on in our meditation is our own breath. You may focus on whatever you are familiar with in your normal meditation as long as it is an appropriate object. It is a mental image of the object. We bring our focus and attention on the object and in relation to our breath we are fully aware of each in breath and each out breath. We imagine seeing the breath going in and going out and we are fully attentive and fully aware of that, not allowing the mind to divert and go off in any other direction but if it does we bring it constantly back to the breath. In this way we will spend the next few minutes in focused meditation. (Pause for meditation)

As introduced earlier the theme of the talk is the six perfections. To actually list them first of all they are,

The Perfection of Generosity
 The Perfection of Ethics
 The Perfection of Patience
 The Perfection of Joyous Effort
 The Perfection of Concentration
 The Perfection of Wisdom

To explain these practices in the context of why they are called Perfections, it is because these are the prime practices of what we call a bodhisattva or a noble being. A bodhisattva is an individual who has taken full responsibility and commitment to work for the welfare of other sentient beings. These beings are called bodhisattvas because they have developed in their mind-stream what is called bodhicitta. Bodhicitta, in Sanskrit, means the enlightened mind and is the state of mind in which the aspiration to relieve the suffering of all beings and bring about happiness for all beings has been developed. The way that bodhisattvas can do that is by achieving the state of enlightenment themselves. To benefit other sentient beings, bodhisattvas make the

vow to be clearly committed to developing their minds and achieving enlightenment, thus they are called noble beings.

When an individual develops that aspiration to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all living beings it becomes a spontaneous and unceasing aspiration where they take the personal responsibility to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all living beings and that is when they become what is called a bodhisattva or a noble being. That state of enlightenment is a state of complete perfection of having acquired all positive qualities. That embodiment of enlightenment is said to be defined, in a simple way, as the achievement of two bodies, which are the form body of the enlightened being and the wisdom-truth body of the enlightened being.

That is the enlightened state to be achieved where there is a total transformation of one's physical body into the form body of the Buddha and the wisdom-truth body in relation to the qualities. Now having developed that aspiration to achieve enlightenment they need to engage in the practices. It is not sufficient just to have that aspiration to achieve enlightenment for the benefit for all sentient beings and not do much about it. Rather one needs to take the initiative to engage in the practice.

The practices that are required to achieve enlightenment can be summarised into the two main categories of the method and the wisdom. One needs to apply both the method and the wisdom for achieving the state of enlightenment. The Six Perfections can thus be summarised into these two categories with the first five subsumed into the method and the last one, the Perfection of Wisdom, encompasses the wisdom that is required to achieve enlightenment. Therefore, the Six Perfections could be understood as a means or method to achieve enlightenment which encompasses both the wisdom aspect and the method aspect needed in the training. Furthermore, one can also understand the Six Perfections in terms of the two purposes that a bodhisattva has, which are their own individual, ultimate purpose and the purpose of benefiting others.

We will briefly go through the Six Perfections individually starting with generosity. Why is it called the Perfection of Generosity? First of all, when one has a genuine intent to give, that is defined as generosity. It begins with a mental intention and when this intention to give is accompanied by the two aspects of the mind of enlightenment and the wisdom which realises selflessness or emptiness then that combination becomes the Perfection of Generosity. Now in relation to ourselves, we all have the capacity to practise generosity. However, we may not yet have developed the capacity to practise it as a Perfection of Generosity because we may not have developed both bodhicitta and the wisdom realising emptiness. If we are yet to develop the mind of enlightenment within ourselves then while we may have the practice of generosity it has not yet become the Perfection of Generosity.

The opposites of each of these practices are also explained, and the opposite of generosity is miserliness. So it is miserliness that would prevent us from being generous. If we do practise generosity it opposes miserliness. Miserliness is something which actually hinders us giving to others and can obstruct us from utilising wealth even for ourselves. If we are miserly it actually prevents us from using our wealth properly for ourselves and others.

Whereas if one practises generosity and overcomes miserliness we can utilise our own wealth in a meaningful way for our own good purposes and also for the benefit of others. Presenting the definition of generosity as the intention to give is something which is significant for us to understand because normally we might think that when we are generous it is the object that we give that is the act of generosity. But that object, whatever it may be, is only the material object and the real generosity is the state of mind with the intention to give.

Therefore, because real generosity is a state of mind it is something in which we can train. We do not need to have great wealth and possessions to be able to practise generosity and give to others. Practising generosity

is something we can do mentally. Even though we may not have much to give now, if we actually practise in our mind the intent to give and practise the various methods of meditation on how to practise generosity then when we do have physical things to give there will not be much hesitation and we will give quite readily.

To give an account about how being generous does not necessary relate to having a lot of material things, I can relate a personal incident where I was going for a meal with acquaintances in St Kilda. When we came out after the meal I noticed someone selling magazines and I was told that this person was homeless and gets a small profit from that. If they sell it for five dollars they maybe keep two dollars. That's something I found out later. Two of my friends bought a magazine so I went over to buy a magazine as well when I understood what it was about and when I went to purchase the magazine the homeless guy looked at me and said 'Oh, you don't have to pay for it'. He was going to give it to me. However, I took the initiative to give him ten dollars. Even amongst billionaires it might not be easy to find those who are able to give right away and say, 'I don't need the money', but this homeless man took that initiative. There are a few cafes and so forth who don't want to charge me anything but it is hard for me to go back to them.

The next is the Perfection of Ethics. Ethics or morality is defined as the intention to restrain from harming others. The opposite of morality would be corrupt ethics.

The next is the Perfection of Patience. First of all, the definition of patience is that in the face of suffering or harm from others, or the experience of one's own suffering to prevent one's mind from being disturbed. To have a clear mind in that state is the practice of patience. The opposite of patience, as we would all know, is actually anger.

This evening is just a brief introduction to each of these Perfections and we can go into more detail tomorrow. However, with anger and

patience being at opposite ends of the spectrum of one's state of mind we can see that when anger occurs there is a disturbance in the mind. The mind is not clear any more because of being disturbed and thus the intention to harm and retaliate will occur in the mind of anger. Whereas with patience there is a clarity of mind and the mind remains calm and peaceful. Even in the event of harmful or uncomfortable experiences there's no sense of wanting to retaliate.

The next is the Perfection of Enthusiasm. It is sometimes called perseverance or joyous effort but it is more correct to call it enthusiasm. The definition of enthusiasm is what we call the joy of engaging in virtue. The opposite of what we call enthusiasm would be laziness. That is something that can affect us all.

When we relate to these practices in a practical way we can see how they can actually help and benefit us in practising the positives in the face of negativities. Miserliness, being defined as a state of mind that hinders us, is a negative state of mind. Practising generosity will help us oppose and overcome miserliness. Corrupt ethics or morality is a non-virtue which hinders our progress, so practising ethics or morality would counteract that. Lack of patience, particularly anger, is something we can all notice as being an obstructive hindrance to our well-being. If we practise patience it can oppose anger. Likewise, with laziness, we all know that it is something which hinders us from progressing and obstructs us in so many different ways. When we apply enthusiasm we can overcome laziness.

The next is the Perfection of Concentration. Concentration is developed through the training in the practice of meditation. The definition of concentration is a mind which is able to be continuously focused on a virtuous object. The opposite of concentration is distraction. Particularly in this context the distractions would be the mind constantly going after objects which cause the delusions, afflictions and the negative states of mind.

The final one is the Perfection of Wisdom. Wisdom is defined as a mind which is able to clearly discern what is positive and what is negative.

Having now briefly listed the Six Perfections we can go into more detail in tomorrow's session. Touching again on generosity, it is said that the practice of generosity, because it is a positive, virtuous practice, will have positive consequences. The immediate positive outcome of practising generosity is that we establish the causes and conditions for ourselves to acquire wealth in the future.

The positive consequences of the practice of ethics is having happiness in the future. There are various different degrees of happiness in relation to our own condition as human beings. We enjoy a certain amount of happiness and maybe the word well-being is also appropriate here in relation to us being humans. The very fact of being human means it comes with certain conditions for our general well-being in comparison with many other species of living beings. The happiness or the well-being that we experience as humans now is said to be the result of practising ethics or morality in the past.

When one practises patience the positive consequences that we reap is said to be beauty or good physical features. When one practises joyous effort or enthusiasm the positive consequences of that is said to be strength, so if we have practised joyous effort in a past lifetime we can then obtain mightiness in a future life. When we practise concentration the positive result that we reap is achieving what we call peacefulness in our mind. When we practise wisdom one reaps the result of being able to free oneself from bondage and achieve liberation from cyclic existence. That is acquired when we develop wisdom.

There are three different subdivisions of the actual practice of generosity. Firstly, being generous with material things, secondly being generous with the Dharma or spirituality, and finally being generous with giving others fearlessness. When practising the first level of generosity we help

by giving relief to others who are suffering deprivation of material needs such as food, drink and clothing. For those beings who are suffering from the lack of those things we can help relieve that immediate need by being generous with these material things.

The next level is being generous with the Dharma or spiritual practice. Generosity with the Dharma means that while those who are deprived of Dharma might have adequate material things they lack an adequate knowledge and understanding of the Dharma. In order to help them to be free from their particular ailments and suffering caused by that lack of understanding we can be generous with the Dharma thereby helping them to achieve that. In both cases, of course, when being generous with material things and the Dharma and likewise with the third kind of generosity, the primary thing one needs to have in mind is the real intention to benefit the other. So with the intention to benefit the other, when one actually engages in this practice, it will definitely be experienced as a benefit.

The generosity of giving others fearlessness is helping to protect them from imminent danger. To give a particular example, if we see an insect drowning in a puddle of water and actually take the initiative to save it from being drowned that will be an act of generosity giving the fearlessness of the imminent danger of death. This is one example of this practice.

Amongst the three types of generosity it is said the most supreme is generosity with the Dharma or spiritual practice, that is the ultimate benefit for others. As explained earlier the positive consequences of practising generosity are acquiring wealth for oneself. When a noble being such as a bodhisattva practises generosity the more wealth they gain the more they are able to help others. Whatever they gain is not a personal gain but rather becomes a means to help others even more extensively. This is why when one relates to the positive result of these practices, and it is taken to the next level of a Bodhisattva practice, then

these positive results that are gained become means which only further help others in a more extensive way. So this is how we now understand the context.

We can finish on that note for this evening and leave the rest for a brief explanation in tomorrow's session. In our limited time I will not be able to go into much detail about all of these practices, or have time to read from a text, but nevertheless just as an introduction I'll present my understanding of these practices. You can then do further research and study from your own readings to compliment that. With all of these practices and relating particularly to the first one of generosity, it really comes from the positive state of mind of wishing to help others. Therefore, the main thing we can take from this positive practice in our daily life is to really try to promote goodwill with others. We can start with those who are in close proximity such as family, relatives, friends and colleagues, having goodwill and wishing to benefit them in any way that we can. That will be the practical way to put this into practice. We all have the capacity to some degree to help others.

The practice of generosity is something that all spiritual traditions have in common. Every religious tradition would adhere to this practice of generosity as a very virtuous practice. We can see that in Christianity generosity is practised to a great extent with many people going out into remote areas to benefit and to help others who are impoverished. So generosity is indeed a really great practice bringing practical benefits to others.

Again relating back to how His Holiness the Dalai Lama describes that the benefit of spiritual traditions such as Christianity is because of the strong faith in their God, followers are inspired by that love from God, and with the belief that the essence of God is love, then the wish to help others and extend that love by benefiting others comes out in the form of spiritual practice. So as His Holiness the Dalai Lama emphasises it is really indeed a practice we can all acknowledge as being truly beneficial.

There might be other spiritual leaders who are teaching in ways that can relate to everyone, however we can definitely take note of how the Dalai Lama is able to relate to all people, in all walks of life when he presents his advice as a true teaching. His explanations relate to everyone on so many different levels.

So we might have to end here because we all need to do something else to sustain ourselves as well and maybe that time has come about.

Day 2

As we did yesterday let us first begin by sitting in a comfortable and relaxed posture and trying to ensure that our mind is in a clear and bright state, that would be adequate for our practice and something which would be good to attempt to do in our everyday lives.

As the great Indian master Atisha says; 'the best instruction is to check our mind; our best friend is mindfulness and introspection, our best knowledge is the intention to benefit others, and the best practice is to subdue our mind'. In relation to the first part of this advice, that the best instruction is checking our mind, this means we really need to check what kind of thoughts are occurring in our mind, ask ourselves whether they are positive or negative thoughts, how are these thoughts generated and what do they lead to? Basically we are investigating our state of mind by having a constant awareness of what is going on in our mind. That is said to be the best instruction.

When we actually take that initiative to look at what is going on in our minds with honest investigation, it becomes apparent that there are certain agitated states of mind that tend to have negative thoughts or attitudes associated with them and certain thoughts that occur in our minds are positive. To be able to recognise and acknowledge this is something which would be of the utmost benefit. When we recognise that for ourselves, we will be able to clearly distinguish between positive

and negative states of mind, then begin to take the initiative by saying to ourselves, 'I definitely need to do something to clear my mind and to work on my mind to promote the positive qualities and remove the negative states of mind'.

That initiative arises because we begin to realise that whatever activity we engage in is preceded by an intention, and thus our actions will be directly influenced by, and can be tainted by, the immediately preceding state of mind. Therefore, having a positive state of mind contributes to positive actions.

The actions that are conducted by the intentions in our mind are either physical actions or verbal actions. Therefore, when we take the initiative to really check what influences what we do or say, we see that it definitely relates to the preceding intention in our mind. How our intentions actually influence our physical or verbal activities becomes very apparent and clear when we take that initiative to have a clear mind. When we notice for ourselves that there are certain states of mind that are classified as being negative attitudes and certain states of mind that are classified as being positive attitudes; then the initiative we take to adopt and further strengthen the positive attitudes and to slowly discard and overcome the negative states of mind becomes something that we are inclined to do. Dharma practice or spiritual practice can basically be summarised as that which involves adopting positive qualities and discarding negativities within ourselves.

With this practice of adopting positive qualities and discarding negativities the initiative to undertake the practice is based on practising non-violence to others, and that is how we define the Buddhist doctrine called the Buddhadharma. People in this gathering here may benefit from the Buddhadharma. When we actually understand what spiritual practice means, in particular in relation to the Buddhadharma, and we adopt the practice based on non-violence, we naturally see the positive qualities within us start to increase and the negativities naturally decrease

because we have recognised them for what they are. By knowing what to focus on and recognising the positive qualities, these positive qualities naturally start to increase. Having recognised the negativities, that very recognition helps us to not be influenced by them and thus they naturally start to decrease. It is in this way that we begin to reap the benefit of practising the Buddhadharma in this lifetime.

It is with this understanding that we also begin to see the relevance of meditation. As described in detail yesterday the meditation practice is the technique which helps us to protect the mind from negativities, and helps the mind to develop clarity leading to a sense of calmness. With this natural tranquillity we experience a genuine sense of peace and happiness within our mind. When we talk about protection of the mind, what is it that we are protecting the mind from? It is protecting our mind from being influenced by distractions, particularly deluded or afflicted distractions.

One example of a deluded distraction is anger. We all know from our own experience that as soon as anger arises in our mind it causes disturbance. We do not experience a peaceful and calm mind but rather a very agitated and uncomfortable state of mind. Therefore, since anger is destructive and causes distress in our mind if there is a means to protect ourselves from anger it becomes worthwhile that we apply that. Likewise, a mind which is influenced by jealousy is a disturbed rather than a happy mind and therefore applying means to protect the mind from jealousy is a reasonable and worthwhile endeavour. Also when there are strong attachments we definitely experience distress, distraction and agitation in the mind.

Applying means to protect the mind from intense attachments becomes very important, and if we pay attention it is clear that if we don't protect our mind from the influence of these intense negativities we will not experience a happy mind. Thus it becomes clear to us we need to definitely apply measures to protect our mind from these negative states of mind and negative distractions.

To apply measures to protect ourselves from these negativities or deluded distractions such as anger and attachment, we first have to investigate how they arise, and in the case of anger, how it is expressed in relation to an object which appears to us as unappealing and riddled with faults. When we focus on an object with a belief and complete conviction that it is unappealing and has no redeeming qualities it gives us reason to develop even greater anger towards that object. An immediate method to overcome that mind of anger is choosing an object which does not cause agitation to arise in our mind. If we focus on an object which does not cause anger, that earlier moment of being completely obsessed starts to be relieved because we are not obsessed and focused on that object. That is how we can release intense moments of anger within us.

With attachment it is the complete reverse in that we see the object as being attractive in an exaggerated way. Having this faulty perception of the object as having only good qualities, with no faults at all, not even seeing the natural defects of the object, will then cause one to be very attached and obsessed with the object. The more we focus on such an object with a faulty perception, the stronger our attachment will become. Therefore, in order to relieve our mind from that intense attachment we focus again on that object of non-attachment, and this will release us from the pangs of strong attachment. It is in this simple way that the technique works by applying the opposite.

So rather than allowing ourselves to dwell on a certain situation or condition that causes us to become angry or upset, it would be much more worthwhile to spend a few minutes just focusing on our breath. Then, even for a few moments, if we can just relax our mind and focus on our breath, we get a release from that intense anger. We will be able to notice for ourselves that we need not be preoccupied with an object that causes us anger. We have a choice to settle our mind and that recognition becomes really beneficial for our lives.

If we take the initiative to apply the meditation practice in our daily life, with this understanding of how it is meant to help us, then, even when we come out of a formal meditation, such as focusing on our breath, there will be an awareness that the mind being influenced by intense anger or attachment is not something positive for us. Rather it is something which can cause us trouble and distress. Then we will be able to be a bit cautious, even out of the meditation session, and in that way for someone who applies meditation regularly, with this understanding, they will reap the benefit of not being easily influenced by objects that cause either attachment or anger to arise in our minds. So this is the practical benefit we can derive. Otherwise if we were to adopt a technique of focusing on our breath just to feel calm for a few moments, and had no other understanding or further insight of the need to practise, then while we may experience momentary calmness and release from an agitated mind during meditation, when we come out of the meditation we might go back to exactly the same situation, there will be no real transformation taking place in our lives.

The next point of advice, by the great master Atisha, is that our best friend is mindfulness and introspection. Indeed, these two states of mind become the optimum companion for us to check our state of mind. If we are influenced by negativities and do not recognise this, that is when we will become completely swayed and under the dominance of that negative or deluded state of mind. Therefore, mindfulness is a state of mind of being constantly aware of one's state of mind, what kind of thoughts are occurring and what kind of activities we are engaging in, remembering how to conduct ourselves appropriately.

Introspection is a particular state of mind which periodically checks if we are conducting ourselves in a proper way or not and whether we are being influenced by the delusions. Introspection is a mind which has a constant vigilance over our thoughts and actions. Therefore, in our every day lives these two states of the mind are said to be of utmost importance in our meditation practice and even when we are out of the meditation practice.

If we apply mindfulness and introspection that becomes our best aid to ensure that we are following the right behaviour and right conduct.

To explain it more simply, in relation to our everyday physical and verbal activities, we need to be constantly mindful of how we conduct ourselves when we are engaged in physical activities and when we are using our speech. We should ensure that we are not using physical actions and speech that cause us or others harm and distress, that whatever actions we do physically and the words we speak are contributing to the well-being of others. When we take that initiative to ensure our physical actions and our speech are applied in an appropriate way it ensures that our activities become virtuous and meaningful. In this way wherever we go and whatever we do, if we maintain awareness of how we conduct ourselves, that really becomes the ultimate protection. This is why mindfulness and introspection are presented as our best companions, because they are the two states of mind which help and protect us from engaging in harmful or meaningless activities at all times. This is how we take the initiative.

Next is the very profound and significant point that the best knowledge is the mind wishing to benefit others. The wish to benefit others stems from the most positive attitudes of love and compassion within us. With a basis of love and compassion we all have the capacity to genuinely benefit and help others. Normally when we look around and see others who have these qualities we feel inspired and think how wonderful that such individuals have great love and compassion for others, but in fact we have those qualities within ourselves too. It is good to recognise the basis of love and compassion within ourselves and acknowledge it as being our most prized possession and the best of our qualities. Because it is based on love and compassion it becomes the basis for us to experience genuine well-being in relation to helping others, but the real beneficiary is ourselves with our own minds being genuinely secured in the most meaningful way. Recognising that we have these qualities and further developing love and compassion within ourselves becomes really worthwhile.

Next is that the best practice derived from our efforts would be the practice where we obtain a naturally subdued mind. The means to subdue the mind are primarily through the practice called the Three Trainings which are the training of morality, the training of concentration and the training in wisdom. It is with these three trainings that we obtain a naturally subdued mind.

Within these three trainings morality serves as the basis. To give an analogy of how this serves as a basis we can think of the earth as a basis for all the rest of the environment to form, such as trees, grass to feed animals, and crops to feed humans. The earth really serves as the basis of all the nutrients which produce what we need to survive and likewise it is said that the practice of morality or ethics serves as the basis for us to develop all other qualities within ourselves. With the basis of morality, it is then possible to develop good concentration, and with good concentration we can have a very clear wisdom in our mind. The actual definition of morality is the mind of restraint.

Ethics is sub-divided into three types, which are; the ethics of restraint from misdeeds, the ethics of gathering virtuous Dharma and the ethics of working for sentient beings. To give an example of what the ethic of restraining from misdeeds relates to, is that for those who wish to take actual vows then it would encompass the three types of main vows, the Self Liberation vows, the Bodhisattva vows and the Tantric vows. When one makes a commitment to keep any of these vows the practice becomes the restraint from misdeeds. However, for ordinary people, who have not taken any vows, then the restraint from misdeeds, which is common for everyone who has an intention to refrain from misdeeds, would be avoiding the Ten Non-Virtuous deeds.

So one refrains or avoids the Ten Non-Virtuous deeds and it becomes a practice of restraint and persistence. The practice of refraining from the Ten Non-Virtues would be to refrain from killing, stealing and sexual misconduct on the physical level and to refrain from lying, divisive

speech, hurtful or harsh speech and idle gossip on the verbal level. The three on the mental level are to refrain from covetousness, harmful intent and wrong views. If we refrain from these Ten Non-Virtues and adopt the Ten Virtuous deeds, then we are practising morality. When we think about it logically, we would be able to immediately confirm that a person who commits themselves to actively and voluntarily avoiding these Ten Non-virtuous deeds is naturally a peaceful person.

Of the Ten Non-Virtuous deeds, presented by the incomparably kind Buddha Shakyamuni, the first is to refrain from killing. The very first misdeed that the Buddha advised his followers to refrain from is the act of taking the lives of others. It is based on this very fact that it is claimed that Buddhism is a practice of non-violence. When we make a commitment to avoid taking the life of other beings and refrain from killing we directly contribute to non-harmfulness towards other sentient beings. As mentioned previously, the intention of refraining from harming others stems from love and compassion within us. Because we have love and compassion for others we would intentionally refrain from wanting to harm them.

To further define and explain what love and compassion mean from the Buddhist perspective, love is wishing those who are deprived of happiness to be happy, and compassion is the wish for those who are experiencing suffering to be free from suffering. Therefore, when we have that attitude of wishing others to be happy and not wishing them to experience any kind of suffering, there is no way that we could have an intention to harm them. We can see logically that any time we do intentionally hurt others it is at that moment that we are lacking a strong feeling of love and compassion towards them. And any time when we think of hurting someone else it is because of the lack of strong love and compassion for the other, that intention of hurting and harming them will come. Therefore, when we develop and genuinely practise love and compassion for others we will not develop intentions to hurt them. From our own experience we find it logical that when we really care for

someone we have no intention to hurt them because we want them to be happy and to be free of suffering.

To give an illustration of how love and compassion are indeed a most worthy state of mind which prevents us from even getting angry with others, I can relate an example of how when children do something which may normally seem inappropriate by others, the parents having great love and compassion for the children will not be upset and angry. This brings to mind how I once saw a young baby on TV, while the mother was changing the nappy the baby started to wee on her but she was just laughing and found it amusing, rather than getting angry. It must have been someone quite well known otherwise they wouldn't have shown it on TV. Because she had such great love and compassion for her child she was not affected by it and did not see it as being annoying. Normally if a stranger weed on you, you would be very angry and upset.

Another story I can relate is how a mother that I am acquainted with told me that when she had to care for her toddler she would sometimes stay up very late at night trying to put her baby to sleep. She mentioned that while it was physically tiring, mentally she didn't see it as being a burden and she actually felt joy in caring for the young toddler. This is really quite amazing when normally we would not want to be deprived of sleep, but when out of great love for the child even that is not taken as a hardship. To that effect His Holiness the Dalai Lama mentioned, in some of his teachings, that it seems that between parents it is the mother who would go to a greater extent of hardship to take care of their children.

His Holiness mentioned a personal account that he experienced on one of his long distance flights, there was a couple with two children, and while the younger child seemed to have gone to sleep right away, the older child was not settling down at all and started to roam everywhere. The dad and the young toddler fell asleep. However, the mother started to go around wherever the older child was going trying to restrain it, to

bring it back and look after it, and she lost the whole night's sleep. His Holiness said the next morning he looked at the mum and she had red eyes as an indication of being sleep deprived. His Holiness was saying from that account he felt that actually the mothers go to greater lengths to look after the children.

Indeed, we can acknowledge that love and compassion on every account, and from any perspective is something that is most worthwhile. It is because of this that I encourage others, whenever I have the opportunity, to always protect love and compassion, never allowing it to diminish and to further promote it within oneself. One practical benefit of fostering love and compassion in our heart is that when we actively promote it we will be safe from the suffering of loneliness. We could not suffer the experience of loneliness because we will naturally have many friends and acquaintances. When we extend a genuine sense of concern for others they will naturally respond in a kindly way and thus we would not be deprived.

The main thing is that we always have a sense of joy in our heart. We can see that the good companionship in a relationship between anyone is really based on love and compassion. This is evident in the animal world as well in how animals care for each other, and that is also based on love and compassion. In the relationship between humans and animals we can see some great accounts of very good companionship that is also based on love and compassion. It is not merely because humans feed their pets, there is something beyond that, the affection that the human has for the animal and visa versa results in very good companionship.

I have an acquaintance who told me that their best companion for the last seventeen years is their cat. We can see when there is a good relationship between humans and animals based on affection for each other, then there is no question that a very good relationship can be formed between humans out of genuine affection, love and compassion for each other. I regularly mention that those who are brought up with a genuine sense of love and compassion will naturally be able to express that in return.

Anyone who is nurtured out of love and compassion definitely turns out to be a very healthy and good human being. That is something we need to pay attention to.

One evening, I was relating the unique relationship between some animals and their masters. I was particularly talking about how when one shows genuine affection to pets, such as dogs, they can definitely protect their owners. When you are kind and good to the dog they will definitely take measures to protect you. However, when it comes to cats I was expressing my doubts about whether a cat can take the initiative to protect an owner or not. Then the very next day someone told me that they had seen a clip on TV that morning where a cat was protecting a child. So they were bringing me a message saying that just as Geshela was raising those doubts about whether a cat can protect owners that was exactly what was shown on TV.

Going back to the main point being relayed is that in relation to avoiding, restraining oneself from the Ten Non-virtues, all of which cause direct harm to others, the initiative to restrain from these will stem from a sense of love and compassion. When we have this true sense of love and compassion we will not intentionally go out of our way to take another being's life. Likewise, we will naturally refrain from stealing or taking something which belongs to someone else, as well as refraining from sexual misconduct which will harm others. Likewise, with speech we will avoid lying, slander or divisive speech, hurtful speech and gossip which all directly hurt others. As the teachings explain, the way to restrain ourselves is to refrain from the actual harm as well as that which initiates the harm. In relation to the Ten Non-virtues the first seven are said to be the ways that we directly cause harm to others while the three of the mind, namely covetousness, harmful intent and wrong views, become the basis of where that harm stems from. The intention to harm comes from the three misdeeds of the mind. To avoid all ten will be the way to refrain from harming others.

What we define as being the practice of the Ten Virtues is the practice of adopting positive qualities and avoiding and discarding negativities. When we adopt the Ten Virtues, which are the direct opposites of the Ten Non-Virtues, we are practising and promoting positive qualities within ourselves and avoiding negativities and that becomes a genuine practice. When we adopt this practice it becomes our real protector. Spiritual practice, or what we call in Buddhist terms the Dharma, is the actual protector. We might relate to external sources to protect us but the real protector is actually the qualities that are within our own mind. When we apply this practice of ethics or morality it becomes the real source of our salvation, freeing us from adversities and negativities and becoming a real protector within us. Thus the real conviction or faith that we need to develop is that protector within ourselves. Having faith or conviction in something arises when we have the recognition that it will not deceive or fail us. Therefore, the practice within ourselves of the virtues and morality will not fail or deceive us, and that is how we can develop that conviction.

Thus it is significant that we investigate further and think about how this practice of morality becomes our protector and how we can develop conviction and faith in that. To explain how the practice of ethics, particularly in relation to refraining from the Ten Non-Virtuous deeds and practising the Ten Virtues, actually becomes a protector is that by adopting and practising ethics in our lives; it is said that morality is the cause to prevent us from taking an unfortunate rebirth in the next life. After this life there is the possibility of taking unfortunate rebirths in what is called the lower realms. The factor that protects us from being reborn in the lower realms is said to be the practice of the Ten Virtues. Therefore, we need not have any qualms or doubts about having to take an unfortunate rebirth if we have practised the Ten Virtues in our life. That is something that we can have a strong conviction about.

In relation to the different religious traditions explaining how we need to acquire the good conditions for our next existence, all major

religions have the common belief that at the end of this life we do not completely cease to exist and become nothing, but rather, there is a part of us that carries on into the next existence. My understanding is that the Christians call it the soul, whereas in Buddhism we talk about the consciousness. All major religions explain that there is a continuity, that after this life there is the continuity of us, the essence of us which goes on. There are different explanations in relation to where we go. Within Buddhism and some Hindu traditions there is a belief in reincarnation where we may come back in different realms. Depending on what kind of realm we are reborn in, whether it is a fortunate or unfortunate one, is dependent upon the causes and conditions we have created in this life.

The good conditions we have now are a direct result of having practised virtue and morality in previous lives, and what we will experience in the next life is dependent upon what we practise in this life. The cause and effect sequence is what Buddhism explains in detail whereas in other traditions, such as Christianity, even though I cannot say I know it in detail, my understanding is that if you abide by the will of God and practices according to the Commandments, then in the next existence one will go to a good place. I think it is called Heaven and it is referred to as being a good place where one can be reunited with God. The causes and conditions to be born in Heaven basically would also be to avoid negativities, God's will basically involves one avoiding negativities and adopting virtues. Therefore, in so far as the practice of adopting virtues and shunning negativities, that is something which we find all traditions share. It is significant that all traditions do have that basic understanding that we need to prepare for our future existences. There was a young child who asked its mum what happens after we die and the mum said, 'When we die we will come back again' and the child said, 'Oh, how nice'.

We don't have time to go into too much detail, however a general understanding of what ethics and morality consist of is something that we seem to share with all major religions. Within the Ten Virtues and avoiding the Ten Non-Virtues the earlier parts seem to be all the

same, whereas for the last one Wrong Views there might be different explanations of what Wrong Views entail. However, the earlier parts are all commonly accepted.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama is someone who has definitely taken the initiative to investigate the different religions, not just as a mere curiosity, but he has actually taken the initiative to get a good understanding of other religious traditions. He has mentioned that in regard to the Ten Non-Virtues the first nine are common, whereas Wrong Views is something which has a different meaning in different religions. Different traditions may have the same term as Wrong Views but how this is described may be different. Of course we are running out of time and maybe we were not intending to cover everything in detail, all the Six Perfections, the next one would be the Perfection of Patience.

We can relate to a very significant saying by one of the great masters, called Geshe Chengawa who mentioned that in his observations, while there are so many different kinds of practices, it can all be subsumed to the two main points, refraining from harming others and wishing to benefit others. It is amazing that he puts it so succinctly into really simple terms.

This is a profound instruction or advice that we can keep in mind and when we think about it is very practical. Firstly, refraining from harming others, if we were to wonder why we should refrain from harming others we need not resort to too much reasoning other than looking upon oneself. If one does not wish for any kind of harm and suffering, then that would be the same for all other living human beings. Indeed, when we look around there is no-one from humans to animals who intentionally want to experience any kind of harm and suffering. Therefore, since there is no one who wishes to experience suffering why would one intentionally want to cause suffering or hurt upon others.

The practical advice I regularly share is the importance of taking the initiative to refrain from harming others. Of course in moments of being upset and angry we need to be more mindful and careful of not hurting the other. The way that we can prevent hurting others intentionally is by thinking about their positive qualities or generating a genuine respect for them. Of course this practice needs to start from home, from our immediate surroundings such as with our partner or an immediate companion that one has a relationship with. And if one can, then of course extend this practice further. In that immediate relationship one has with a partner we need to take the initiative, from our own side, to refrain from hurting them in any way.

There may be times in a family when we feel a bit upset or annoyed with our partner but as parents we should remind ourselves that we should not be hurting the other because they are the parent of our children. A father should think, she is the mother of my children who I dearly love so it is not reasonable for me to hurt her. If I love my children, then I should likewise love their mother. Then from the mother's side she should also take the initiative to think that I should not hurt the father of my children because just as I love my children I need to extend that care and love towards the father as well. So it is with this sort of understanding that we can help to prevent ourselves from intentionally really hurting the other and can also train our minds.

When we take the initiative to refrain from hurting others then slowly that mutual relationship can start to become much better again. As I say regularly the person who we consider a companion or friend, is the one we know is not going to hurt us and will do their best to help us. We automatically relate to them as our best friend, and indeed they are. We need to take the initiative to recognise who has the genuine intention to only help us and has no wish to hurt us.

Now in order to practise these simple guidelines, as mentioned earlier, the practice of refraining from hurting others as well as benefiting others

whenever we can, we have to practise to develop patience. Without patience it would be very difficult to practise. The reason why we definitely need to cultivate patience in order to practise these two points is because if we lack patience when someone hurts or harms us in any particular way we immediately generate the wish to retaliate. If we retaliate then the other would also take the initiative to harm us back and then it would escalate. When harm is returned for harm there is no end to harmfulness upon each other. Therefore, because there will be no end to harm we would not be able to naturally practise the second point of advice to benefit the other. The wish to benefit the other is not possible.

As mentioned yesterday, the definition of patience would be to remain undisturbed in the face of harm and suffering and thus to have a clear mind. The harm refers to when others harm us and also to when we experience some difficulties and hardships ourselves. In relation to the definition of patience, the real practice of patience is to not allow our minds to become agitated or disturbed but rather to remain calm in the face of these adversities. This means if we don't retaliate immediately, that restraint itself may not necessarily be the practice of patience if inside we are in turmoil and we are harbouring resentment within our minds, then it would not be a genuine practice of patience. So the real practice of patience would have to fit in with the definition of not allowing our minds to become disturbed in the face of harms and any kind of hardships. That is the true measure of being patient.

The practice of patience is sub-divided into three types of patience: the patience of remaining calm when attacked or harmed, the patience of accepting suffering, and the patience to gain assurance in the Dharma.

The first is the patience of remaining calm when attacked or harmed. This again relates to the definition of patience, when we are harmed in any way, if we don't remain calm and allow our minds to become upset, then the unease in our minds will produce anger. Anger arises always

from the mind which is not at ease. When the mind is happy and calm there is no reason for anger to arise. So therefore to keep the mind calm in this event would be the main way to prevent our minds from becoming angry.

We do not have enough time to go into detail, but there is a particular explanation given in the text of how, when an object, such as a person, harms us we should immediately consider whether they are harming us out of their own control or without control. Of course, in this investigation the conclusion which the Teachings present is that whoever harms us is doing so because they do not have control. It is without control or because they are dominated by the afflictions that they are harming us.

To take this explanation further, as presented in the Teachings; if someone were to hit us with a stick, we immediately find reasons to be upset and angry towards that person who has hit us with a stick. Now, of course the reason we're getting angry and upset, finding reasons and rationalising why we feel angry is because we feel the harm, we feel the hurt and the pain that we received. The investigation as presented in the Teachings is that if we were to become angry with what directly caused us pain then, rightly we would have to be upset with the stick, because it's not the actual contact with the person that caused us the pain but it was the contact with the stick that caused us the pain.

So we would have to reason that we should get upset with the stick because that's what caused us the pain. But then our minds will immediately jump to the other reasoning, but if the person did not hold the stick, the stick itself would not come up and hurt us. We would say that of course the stick does not have any control over itself, it is being controlled by the person. Therefore, we would still find reason to get upset with the person who hit us with the stick. With that same logic and line of reasoning, the Teaching takes us further into questioning, well if the person were not influenced by the afflictions such as anger or annoyance, whatever infliction that caused them to hurt us they could

not possibly hurt us. Therefore, they are under the control of their afflictions. So if we were really to get upset then the real target of our being angry should be the afflictions in their mind rather than the person themselves. It is with this sort of contemplation and reasoning that it is said that we can start to practise the real patience of remaining calm when we are attacked or receive harm from others.

The second type of patience is the patience of accepting suffering. Again this is a very significant point. While we don't have time to go into detail, another reason for us to feel annoyed and upset is when we are experiencing hardships or any kind of suffering, as explained in the teachings, the reason we get upset and angry is because we cannot accept the hardships. When we have minds that completely reject the hardship and that cannot see any value or benefit from it, then that is when we see it as being an unwelcome situation and we become annoyed and angry. The practice here, according to the teachings, is training our mind to actually begin to accept the hardships. As mentioned in the teachings and in advice by other Masters, actually accepting hardships becomes the best method to solve the problem.

Hardships can be divided into two main categories in relation to how we experience them, physical hardships and mental hardships. We can be physically or mentally unwell.

To help deal with hardships we can refer to the great Indian master, Shantideva, who gives us a very practical approach about how to deal with mental and physical hardships. He mentions that if there is a solution to whatever problem that arises then there is no need to worry. Why worry if there is a solution? Now having investigated and looked into every angle and finding that there is no solution to overcome the problem, then again, what is the use of worrying?

Worrying itself will not solve the problem so he is saying why worry then

as well. It is a very practical approach, and the main thing here to consider is that while we might face some physical hardships such as mental and physical ailments and disease and so forth, if there is a method to cure that disease then we need not worry too much because there is a cure, we just have to take the measure of finding the right treatment. In the event that there is a sickness and there is no cure, if we start agonising over that, starting to become really anxious and worried, this will cause us more hardship and doesn't help to solve the problem. It doesn't help to cure the disease and causes us extra suffering when we allow our mind to worry about it.

In relation to our physical and mental hardships we need to really protect the mind. During physical difficulties, if the mind remains strong and calm we can more effectively deal with those situations. Sometimes the mind goes into a state of causing unnecessary anxieties, worries and paranoias to arise when there is no real problem happening. The mind starts making up different problems and that is a source of unwanted suffering for oneself.

To give an example from what I've heard of other's experiences is that someone after being diagnosed with an eye disease, which may be a minor thing that can be fixed, starts to think, Oh, what kind of illness can it be and maybe I'll go blind. They add an extra mental agony to the reality, when apparently the disease is not such a severe ailment and can be cured.

However, the mind starts conjuring up all sorts of different scenarios about how one may go blind and so forth. It is said that mental agony and pain are much more severe than the actual physical ailment and that is the reality of the story. Someone who has less worries will definitely be a happier person. In contrast someone who has a lot of worries and keeps on thinking about many different scenarios will naturally be a sadder person.

This is a story that I have related previously and some of you might have heard before, it is about when we were escaping from Tibet to come into India. It was a very uncertain and anxious time, going to a country we had no understanding of and no previous affinity with. On the escape route I recall one of the senior monks who was called Geshe Kachen. He related to me later that he was constantly worrying about what the conditions would be like. We were going into a country that we had no knowledge of and where we didn't know anyone, and so it would seem like an alien place. He worried about what we would get to eat and how we would survive there. Then one of the junior monks in that escape group made a comment to Geshe Kachen saying, 'Oh, we should not need to worry too much because we are going to a country where other humans are dwelling so we will be able to eat whatever they are eating and we will be able to wear whatever they are wearing'. Geshe Kachen later said that in hindsight that really helped his mind to become calmer. Then indeed when we actually escaped and arrived in India one of the first meals we were given was rice and lentils and so that is what we ate. Certain kinds of food which were given to us we did not know how to eat so we actually had a lot of diarrhoea.

I'd like to end the session here and before I conclude first of all I really appreciated that you paid a lot of great attention and if you have found something useful in what I have shared please keep that, try to remember and keep that in your heart. I'd also like to again share my appreciation for those of you who have organised this gathering. I am really happy about that. Amongst the organising community here there is one old friend and student, Marie, who unfortunately was not able to attend our session this time due to being unwell, but even though she has not been able to attend physically, of course we have her here in spirit and we can pray for her health and well-being. In my mind I consider that you are present even though you are not here physically with us. One thing that I remember from her is that she makes nice meals and maybe I am just missing the meals.

I'd like to remind you again that no matter what size your group may be, whether it is a few people or a larger number, the main thing is to really help each other out and be kind to each other. That is very important. This is relevant to our last topic of patience as we definitely need to have patience in any group. That kindness should extend to our own immediate relatives such as aged parents. It is a good service when we take care of our aged parent and I normally relate that as being really worthwhile and one of the main practices of Dharma.

I have just thought of the account where I was meeting an Australian monk that I have known for many years and I asked him about his mother. He mentioned that his mum was now at the ripe old age of over ninety years, and that while her body was quite frail, mentally she was sound and she seemed calm. Apparently the mother had previously taken the initiative to practise reciting a lot of Tara mantras and so forth which may have contributed to her calm state of mind. He also mentioned that his sister was looking after their mum twenty-four hours a day. When he told me about his sister taking care of their mother I made the comment that what his sister was doing was the real practice of Dharma. I went on to comment that I could not immediately say that his attempts to meditate and recite prayers was the practice of Dharma, but his sister was definitely practising the Dharma. He said, 'Really, are you sure?' to which I replied, 'Definitely, because even our kind teacher the Buddha mentioned that caring for the sick and the aged is one of the best practices'.

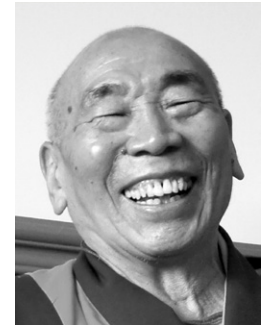
For us, at our level of an ordinary being, taking the initiative to care for others is really the most we can manage but the best we can do as well. For us ordinary beings that becomes the best means to accumulate merit and to also purify negativities. The reason that I mentioned to him that I was not sure about his practices of meditation and prayers necessarily being Dharma was because that is something that is hard to detect, whereas when someone is genuinely helping others we can see that it is something of obvious practical benefit. I was serious in what I told him and I do believe that what I shared is true.

As I mentioned in last night's session, we possess our physical body and our mind, and therefore we need to take the initiative to take care of both our physical health and our mental health. We need to acquire the right conditions to make sure we are living a life conducive for our physical health and also for our mental happiness. We can summarise our activity into the two main areas of taking care of our body and taking care of our mind. We can conclude now, and I would like to thank everyone again. Thank you very much and Tashi Delek.



Tonglen

Day 1, 2015



I'm very happy to meet with you again. I consider you all as my Dharma friends. It's always nice to meet Dharma friends again and also for you to continuously keep your core group together and try to do some practice together. I really appreciate that. This group you've formed here is not like any other normal activity. It is really a virtuous activity that you're doing together because it involves generating a good heart and kindness within oneself, expressing that to others and making how to practise a good heart available for others as well. That very activity involves such great positive deeds and the cultivation of such positive states of mind, so having this group together is something in which you can definitely rejoice and be really happy and grateful about.

It is not easy for you to organise and arrange this gathering as it takes a significant amount of time and energy, however you do so with the intention in mind that it can benefit and help yourselves and others. Therefore, I would also like to thank you for the wonderful arrangements you have made. I strongly believe that you will maintain and try to keep your core group together and help others as well, and that is something which I encourage you to do as it's something which will be really beneficial for your entire life.

As mentioned earlier I am very happy to be with my Dharma friends again. It is traditional to offer something when you meet friends and I intend to offer something to you. What I intend to offer from a good state of mind within and a good motivation are some words which may be useful for your life. With a good intention I offer that as a present. It is indeed important for the presenter in relation to giving a Dharma talk to have the purest of motivations. A pure motivation or intention is one which is not mixed with a contrived state of mind or worldly concerns that are motivated by delusions. Generating a positive motivation is something we all need to take into consideration.

One thing that we can take into consideration is that we all have something in common which is wherever we may be and whatever we may do, we all need to have good conditions for ourselves. In relation to the need for good conditions that's something which on an obvious level, we all know that we require for our well-being. In fact, we work and spend a lot of our activity in ways to acquire good conditions for our well-being. We have no qualms in the fact that we need good conditions, however what we need to take into consideration is identifying the proper conditions for our well-being.

In terms of good conditions there may be some who consider having money and a significant amount of wealth as good conditions for their well-being. Some may consider companionship or friendship as essential for one's well-being. Whatever we may categorise in general as being necessary conditions for one's well-being, ultimately what we can all agree upon and what we need to consider is that the conditions become adequate means for one to experience genuine happiness, as that is what we really wish for. We all strive for a true sense of fulfilment and happiness and the removal of any unwanted experiences of suffering. We naturally strive for this just by the mere fact that we are individual beings with a conscious mind and have feelings. The fact that we are living beings naturally means that we strive for happiness and do not wish to experience any kind of misery or suffering.

This acknowledgement will make us see that one's own happiness is indeed something really precious and valuable. When we acknowledge this, we will begin to understand that happiness is something that we need to treasure. Happiness can be considered the best of our wealth and is the essence of having a meaningful life. In every aspect when we consider our well-being, happiness comes down to the core of what we are striving for. Therefore, in relation to one's well-being each one of us has a responsibility to really protect whatever happiness we have and to further increase that. This is something we all need to do.

The reasons why we need to value and cherish and thus protect our happiness is because when one is in a happy state of mind then that becomes the basis for one to be able to accomplish many other valuable things in one's life. In contrast to that when our mind is unhappy that will affect whatever we wish to achieve in life. Whatever goals we may have in life are hindered and it becomes difficult or impossible to achieve those goals. This advice may sound very practical and simple but it is really something which is at the core of the necessities for one's well-being. It is something I think we all need to pay attention to.

When one has taken all this into consideration in relation to oneself and begins to acknowledge that it is of paramount importance, then we will also be able to expand our view and relate it to how other living beings, whether humans or animals or other living forms, all have exactly that same inclination and wish to experience happiness and to be free of all enemies and suffering. The reason for this is because they have an identity of an individual self and that is the basis for why there is this natural inclination of wanting happiness for the self and not wanting any kind of sufferings for the self. Just as it is with oneself all other beings also have the same inclination, so that is something we begin to really understand.

Thinking in this way will begin to kindle that sense of concern followed by a genuine sense of love and compassion for other beings. The more we consider the reality that other beings also wish to experience

happiness and don't wish to experience suffering the stronger the sense of connection with them will become. Thus the need for the happiness of other beings and the need for the removal of their suffering becomes something which we will begin to not only acknowledge but also wish for. When one goes beyond just focusing on oneself as the most important individual being, one begins to see that the well-being and happiness of other beings is of utmost importance. This is something which comes through the training of our mind.

When one considers this deeply and begins to think in this way one starts to develop very positive ways of thinking and a very positive attitude within oneself. The reason this is a positive and good attitude in relation to oneself is because this positive way of thinking will help to remove a lot of unwanted miseries, mental agony and suffering within oneself. If we consider why this is so and how it will actually help us, we first of all consider how the well-being of others affects us. Leaving aside the larger scale and thinking of those we consider dear or close we can definitely experience that sometimes they express liking for us and sometimes they express dislike for us, and these expressions affect our own state of mind to be either joyous and happy or feeling down and sad. That is something we can definitely relate to.

Thus when others express likes or dislikes towards oneself initially our normal reaction may be to take it very personally and become upset. When they express dislike towards us and all the range of emotions and gestures which accompany that dislike, we may initially react with a mind of anger, feeling upset and angry. Then of course when we experience a mind of being upset and angry we experience the shortcomings and mental turmoil of that ourselves. Now, with the understanding based on knowing that the likes and dislikes and appropriate and inappropriate gestures all stem from a state of mind that is an unhappy, negative and troubled state of mind, then we can understand that the person experiencing this will uncontrollably express inappropriate gestures and sentiments of dislike and so forth.

When we begin to understand that other individuals are affected by an unhappy or negative state of mind themselves and it is not in their actual nature to express these ill behaviours, then what replaces the initial state of a mind of anger is a genuine concern, love and compassion for them. If they are in an unhappy state of mind and their inappropriate gestures and sentiments of dislike are actually expressed out of this unhappy state of mind then it is most fitting that we feel genuine concern, love and compassion for them. That is the time we need to take into consideration their need to be happy as well.

If we consider anyone a good companion it is in times of strife and difficulties that we would be most likely to extend our help towards them. Even in relation to oneself, one would have the expectation or feeling that others, especially good companions, would have the natural response of wanting to help us in times of difficulty and strife. Taking that into account it becomes a most appropriate time to express our love and compassion when they are affected by the negative state of mind that is causing them unhappiness.

Training one's mind to cultivate this positive way of thinking imbued in love and compassion is something which when developed will definitely benefit oneself. The immediate beneficiary is oneself and it actually benefits others when one has a genuine understanding of where they are coming from and extends a genuine concern for them. Because love and compassion are the very basis of experiencing benefit for oneself and others they are considered the very core or essence of what we call the Dharma.

Any individual being who cultivates and develops a state of mind of genuine love and compassion would be an individual whose very commitment is to only benefit others and to not harm others. When any individual being adopts the practice of having the intention to only benefit others and the intention to never hurt or harm others in the slightest, there's no doubt or qualms about how precious such a person would

be. Such an individual would be a highly treasured and valuable person wherever they may be, whatever occasion or whatever surrounding they may be in. Where does the practice of actually engaging in benefiting others and not hurting or harming others stem from? Again it comes back to the basis of love and compassion.

As mentioned previously by using one's own inclinations and experiences as an example, one applies that to other beings and realises that just like oneself all other living beings have exactly the same inclination of not wanting to experience any kind of misery and suffering and only want to experience happiness. Using that as a reason when one reaches the point where one is not able to bear to see others suffer, then that state of mind is called compassion. And when one cannot bear to see others deprived of happiness, then that is called love. On the basis of not being able to bear seeing others suffer and extending whatever one can within one's ability to help relieve the suffering of others is putting compassion into action.

Likewise, when not being able to bear seeing others deprived of happiness one actively engages in helping them to gain a level of happiness, and that action that one takes is called an action of great love. That is how love and compassion, starting from a state of mind, are put into action. In order to truly benefit others, it has to come from a state of mind of not wanting others to experience suffering and wanting others to be happy. Without the recognition and understanding that others need to be free from suffering and others wish to experience happiness there is no true way one can act to benefit others.

To emphasise the main point raised earlier, all of this is possible from a happy state of mind. When one is in a happy state of mind one is able to acknowledge this and establish, cultivate and practise it. In a very practical way, as I regularly emphasise, we need to take into consideration our own happiness and well-being because of the fact that as an individual being we are a combination of our body, mind and

individual self and these three are inseparable. There is the individual self, which we call 'identity', then in relation to that we have a body and we have a mind and these are inseparable at all times. The happiness and well-being of all three combined is something which is essential.

When we experience death at the end of this life we leave behind our gross physical body and what survives and goes along with us into the next existence is our individual self and mind and whatever positive, happy states of mind we have cultivated.

Again when we consider our happiness, it is in relation to our physical well-being and our mental well-being that we can confirm that we are happy. When anyone asks us if we are happy we immediately relate to both our physical health and our mental health as to whether we are happy or not. That is true isn't it? When someone asks us whether we are happy it is not the amount of money or wealth that one has that one will point to saying, 'Yes, I'm happy because I have money or wealth'.

In fact, there have been many people whom I meet when I go out occasionally, who are from normal walks of life and are not really religious minded or Buddhist for that matter, but they confide in me that they have quite a bit of money yet they are not really happy. This is one of the few incidences proving that just having money and wealth doesn't seem to be sufficient for one's happiness. Likewise, just because one has many friends this doesn't necessarily contribute to happiness. Some may say, 'Yeah, I'm happy because I have many friends', but ultimately even having friends may not guarantee that one has a happy state of mind.

Of course there is a time and place to say, 'Oh yes I'm happy because I've got many friends' or 'I've got a sufficient amount of wealth', but that can only be expressed on the basis that one's physical body and mind are really quite well. One may point to the other attributes such as having wealth and friends as being a source of happiness but that is only possible based first of all on the well-being of one's body and mind. So coming back

to the main point again, when one can acknowledge this fact then one would see the importance of really maintaining the good conditions for our true sense of happiness which is physical health and mental health. These become most essential for one's happiness. Therefore, in one's life, whatever one may be engaged in, always consider and remind oneself that the most important thing to train in and secure is one's physical well-being and primarily one's mental well-being.

When we take all of this into consideration we can begin to accept that significant time should be spent investigating the means and ways to secure our physical and mental well-being. What are the conditions that can help promote one's physical and mental well-being? As mentioned previously our mental well-being and happiness are paramount to our overall well-being. We first of all need to understand what obstructs our mental well-being and happiness. When that is identified then we need to identify how to remove those obstructions that cause one not to have mental happiness and in fact cause turmoil within oneself.

What causes mental turmoil and unhappiness in one's mind is said to be the discursive thoughts that we occupy ourselves with. 'Discursive thoughts' is an umbrella term to include all the different ranges of destructive states of mind. The discursive thoughts are simply those which are irrelevant to our happiness and well-being and are constantly distracting our mind. For as long as the mind is completely swayed and influenced by the discursive thoughts to that extent the mind would be restless, agitated and thus in an unhappy state. The best method or technique which can help one to settle down the mind so that it is not influenced and swayed by discursive thoughts is presented in our teachings as the practice of meditation. Meditation is where one intentionally prevents the mind from following all the discursive thoughts and places the mind on a positive object. This technique becomes the way to protect the mind from being swayed and influenced by discursive thoughts.

Adopting this meditation technique, when we have adequately understood the technique and applied it in our everyday life, will definitely start to bring a transformation and a great benefit for oneself. The great benefit comes because we will begin to have a little bit more control over our state of mind as opposed to a mind which is uncontrolled and completely influenced by discursive thoughts. When we are influenced by these discursive thoughts it is destructive to our well-being and happy state of mind. The very construction of those thoughts is actually based on falsity and not on reality and therefore brings about unwanted states of mind such as a lot of worries, anxiety and irrational fears. When the mind is gripped by these anxieties, unnecessary worries and fears then naturally the mind becomes agitated and this is a destructive state of mind and thus an unhappy state of mind.

When we apply this technique in the proper way we may not get immediate results. In fact, we shouldn't be seeking immediate results but rather gradual progress. If we apply and slowly perfect the technique, we'll begin to notice that there's a true sense of release occurring in one's mind. One's mind starts to become released from these unnecessary worries, fears and anxieties and the mind becomes naturally more settled. One develops a more courageous state of mind, free of fear and anxieties, and a clearer state of mind where there are more positive strategies in one's mind. This is how the mind becomes much more stable and controlled and that is how one will benefit. This is something you will find out slowly through your own experience and you won't have to rely on explanations alone.

This is seen through our own experience or also can be understood through our own insight which we call wisdom. It is through an intelligent mind known as 'analytical wisdom' that we are able to clearly see that a mind which is swayed and influenced by the discursive, distracting thoughts causes destruction and unhappiness to one's mind. Another term for 'discursive thoughts' is 'superstitious thoughts', which as mentioned earlier is the umbrella term that includes all of the

unnecessary, destructive thoughts within oneself. Likewise, through our insight wisdom, gained through our own experiences, we can begin to see that a mind which is free from discursive thoughts is a stable and happy state of mind enabling one to experience well-being. Having understood that there is a benefit from this practice to be free from the discursive states of minds, then if there's a method it is to our advantage to take the personal responsibility to apply that in our practice. It is something which will benefit oneself and if we can remove that which is destructive and causes us angst and unhappiness then again it is in our best interest to engage in that and to acknowledge that benefit.

We begin to really understand and clearly see that what benefits oneself is an undistracted and tranquil state of mind and thus a positive state of mind. Likewise, what causes harm to oneself is a mind which is completely influenced and swayed by discursive, distracted states of mind. To establish and engage in ways that will benefit oneself and to engage in means and ways to remove that which harms oneself is something we need to take into consideration and apply.

To understand this in a simple and easy way let's consider the following scenario. If we get upset and angry then with that angry state of mind when we relate to a companion or friend and express gestures out of that anger, do we feel happy afterwards? Does it contribute to our happiness or does it actually contribute to more misery towards one's self? This gesture started from our unhappy, angry mind but by expressing that to our companion or friend it makes them become agitated, unhappy and angry too.

Now having mentioned that when we express inappropriate gestures out of anger towards a companion or friend they would also be affected if they have not applied the practices of protecting their own mind, and if they are not familiar with the practice of patience then that will be the case. Of course if they have applied the practice of protecting their own mind through the trainings of patience and the like then it would only be

ourselves who have the ill effects of agitation and an angry state of mind, while our companion is not affected. But if that is not the case then it will affect them as well and both will end up being unhappy. One begins with an unhappy state of mind and expressing those inappropriate gestures out of anger affects the other to be in that state of mind also. So in contrast to that we can train our mind to cultivate positive states of mind where our mind is not agitated and not influenced strongly by negative states of mind such as anger and so forth and instead of anger have love and compassion in our heart.

If one can develop these to a great extent, we can express genuinely kind gestures towards others which in their very expression promote well-being and happiness within oneself, and as they are expressed to others the recipients of one's kind gestures are definitely affected in a positive way and helped to promote their well-being and happy states of mind. This is how we can see the positive state of mind and the practice of love and compassion as opposed to a state of mind of anger.

Love and compassion are paramount to our well-being and happiness, so when we acknowledge this we need to put it into practice by making the commitment within oneself that on all occasions, whatever we may be doing and in whatever environment including when we go to sleep, the state of mind that we should not be separated from is love and compassion. Love and compassion should accompany oneself on all occasions and at all times. When we secure love and compassion within our heart then that becomes the great source of not only internal happiness and well-being for ourselves but also a great source of making a good connection with others. When one makes a good connection with others one will naturally be surrounded by good companions, good friends and well-wishers and naturally one will not be deprived of any true companionship because of one's positive state of mind of love and compassion.

The way that we put it into practice in our daily lives is to acknowledge that love and compassion are really the most essential elements to one's

well-being and the well-being of others. To cultivate this sentiment one can periodically bring up these thoughts and as an aspiration or wish in one's mind to think 'may all beings be endowed with happiness and may all beings be free from suffering'. The more we acquaint ourselves with this way of thinking the more our mind becomes accustomed to these positive states of mind or sentiments.

In summary if one is inclined to practise the Dharma one wonders what should I be practising and how do I practise it? It is really the cultivation, strengthening and further development of love and compassion in one's heart that is the essence of practising the Dharma.

Having explained the measures of how to protect one's mental well-being and happiness we can now look at the conditions for our physical well-being. Of course you are already quite skilled in that, however in summary one of the optimum ways to protect one's physical health is by ensuring that one does not consume food and the like that will harm one's physical health. Protecting one's physical health is really in relation to what we consume. If we protect ourselves from harmful substances, then that will protect our physical health. If with some foods or other substances, we resort to saying it tastes nice or makes me feel nice then consuming it with just that in mind is disregarding how it might affect one's physical health. If one disregards that then naturally ill effects on one's health would occur. In order to really protect oneself one needs to take into consideration that just because it tastes nice isn't sufficient reason to consume whatever it may be.

What I am relating to now is in regard to the taste buds. Apparently the taste buds are around the edge of the tongue not right in the middle. You could investigate yourself and if you put a sweet substance right in the middle of your tongue you won't taste it. It's only when it starts to melt and then goes to the side of the tongue that you start to taste it. I've done that experiment myself. While it's not considered good manners in our Tibetan tradition to eat on both sides of the mouth at the same

time if you do have food on both sides equally you seem to taste more of it. That's something which I've noticed as well. The main point being whether we call something tasty or not is really just a result limited to our taste buds which doesn't really last very long.

It is good to reflect upon this as a way to avoid certain foods or substances which one may be resorting to just because they taste nice but which in fact have harmful properties. If we consume such things when we know that it harms our health, then it would be really sad to destroy one's health just because it tastes nice. Just as the measures that were explained earlier about how to protect one's mind by becoming one's mental doctor one needs to also be like one's doctor on a physical level, ensuring that one maintains good health by avoiding certain foods that may be harmful.

While we still may need to go to an actual doctor occasionally to find out other symptoms and diagnoses for our general well-being we're the one who needs to take the initiative to avoid certain foods rather than waiting until we go to a doctor to be told they should be avoided. Prior to that if we can take measures to protect our health that would be much wiser. Also when sudden illnesses come it can be due to karma. We do talk about certain illness being due to previous strong karmas, however a lot of our illnesses are due to our own wrongdoings of not being cautious in protecting our health. I emphasise these points as a way to ensure that we maintain good health. Particularly for the younger generation I emphasise these points again and again that we need to be mindful and careful about what we consume.

One of the main points I considered when I was asked about a topic for the teaching was what would be helpful. My suggestion was Tonglen Practice which is the practice of giving and taking. It is a grand name and a grand practice. With this practice in essence one first meditates on cultivating compassion. Tonglen practice is a way to further develop and cultivate our compassion which is as mentioned earlier a deep sentiment

of wishing others to be free from suffering. As a way to put it into practise in the meditation one visualises being surrounded by all sentient beings who are all experiencing various types of suffering.

Now of course suffering is subsumed into either physical suffering or mental suffering. When we consider the state of human beings and really scrutinise their experiences one can conclude that there's no ordinary human being who is not experiencing some level of suffering. Whether it is a physical suffering or a mental suffering they are experiencing suffering in so many various ways on different levels. In summary one can conclude that all sentient beings are suffering. We can relate to those who are experiencing extreme sufferings but on a subtle level there are sentient beings who are experiencing various levels of suffering. The main point to envision is the feeling of how wonderful it would be if they were free from all these various types of sufferings and one develops that strong sentiment and wish in one's mind focusing on all sentient beings.

By focusing on the suffering that is experienced by sentient beings one develops this strong wish within one's mind where one feels how wonderful it would be if beings were free from all levels of suffering. We call that sentiment the cultivation of compassion and we are focusing on all sentient beings and then contemplating that these sentient beings who are suffering because they don't have the conditions of happiness are experiencing unhappiness. When one cultivates a strong wish that these sentient beings be endowed with every possible happiness then one is cultivating great love towards all sentient beings.

When one meditates in this way again and again and when one particularly focuses on the objects of compassion which are the beings who are suffering then one begins to develop a sense of compassion within one's mind. When one particularly focuses on beings who are deprived of happiness and then based on that sentiment wishes them to be endowed with happiness one is cultivating love within one's mind. It's in this way that one familiarises one's mind by meditating on this again and again that

a true transformation starts to take place and a true sense of a genuine concern of love and compassion will start to develop within oneself.

A true transformation starts to take place within oneself when one develops such a positive state of mind, however when one considers other sentient beings' welfare the reality is that there's no real change or transformation happening externally and beings are still suffering and are still deprived of happiness. When one realises that while one has a strong wish for beings to be happy and for all beings to be free from suffering the reality is that they are still experiencing suffering and they are still deprived of happiness. At that point, the strong wish from the earlier transformation of the mind of indifference coming to a mind of truly wishing other beings to be free from suffering and endowed in happiness, a more profound transformation starts to take place within one's mind through that familiarity with the practice and one develops the Superior Intention.

The Superior Intention is a state of mind where those earlier sentiments are not a mere wish anymore but where one actually takes the personal responsibility of freeing beings from suffering and endowing them in happiness. When one develops that sentiment and the strong mind that 'I will do everything which is necessary to free other beings from suffering and lead them to a state of happiness' then one has developed what is called a Superior Intention.

This practice we call Tonglen or giving and taking, is tailored towards further developing that Superior Intention and to make it a firm, stable, positive state of mind within oneself. As presented in the practice, in the giving part one is imagining giving in a form of meditation as a way to familiarise one's mind with taking the personal responsibility for freeing other beings from suffering and endowing them with happiness.

In giving one imagines giving one's physical body, all one's wealth and the merit that one has accumulated to sentient beings. One imagines

giving that, in a particular practice of visualisation, to sentient beings and one imagines that beings are endowed in well-being and happiness when they receive that.

In taking, one imagines one takes from sentient beings their suffering, the causes of their suffering as well as the imprints of the causes of the suffering. That is what one is taking upon oneself, so in taking these one imagines that all beings are freed from all of the causes of their sufferings and the suffering themselves. The very causes and the very imprints of those causes of suffering are completely removed from sentient beings and they are endowed in happiness and free from all suffering.

At the beginning one does this meditation just with the visualisation of giving one's body, wealth and merit and taking on the sufferings on a mental level. As one's mind becomes acquainted with that practice on the level of visualisation then one can take it to the next step which is to combine it with the practice of breathing. When one breathes in one imagines taking in the sufferings of sentient beings and when one breathes out one is giving all the sources of one's happiness, one's body, possessions and merit to them.

To immediately go into the practice of combining it with the breathing would not be suitable because one is not really familiar with the visualisation, so thus one's first acquaintance is on a mental level then one combines it with the breathing technique later. When one puts this into practise it becomes a really powerful practice as it is one of the most supreme methods to accumulate extensive merit, which is like positive karma, and at the same time it is one of the most supremely powerful ways to purify one's negative karmas, thus it is said to be an incredible and powerful practice.

We don't have to rush today so in the session tomorrow we can go over the practice as it is presented. What was presented today was the basis of why we would do this practice. We can go into more detail of the

actual explanation of this practice in our session tomorrow. In saying that I'll go into the practice tomorrow that of course then becomes the actual practice. What was explained today would be considered the preliminary to the practice. However, for beginner practitioners it is said that often the preliminary is sometimes even more essential and beneficial than the actual practice. Those are the occasions when on a beginner's level where one might not be able to fully utilise the practice then the preliminary part of the practice is very important.

As we have covered in detail what this practice entails and what kind of mindset we are trying to cultivate it shouldn't be too difficult tomorrow to just go over the text and we might be able to relate to it quite easily. Then that can be followed with a meditation. Today we didn't have time for a meditation but after going through this explanation a bit that can become the meditation practice for tomorrow. When the meditation practice is taken seriously then the effect it would have is that the individual who comes into meditation and the individual who leaves after meditation would be different as a transformation would have taken place. In fact, it is true that when we do a meditation like this a person who comes in with quite a heavy mind laden with negativities having done the practice, even for a short time, will leave the meditation with a much lighter mind because of the purification of those negativities from the mind. This is something which definitely occurs and it is true when a practice of meditation is taken seriously that the individual who goes in will come out a different person.

To relate an account from some years ago of an individual, who was not really even Buddhist at that time, who came to a meditation session and later said that in adopting this meditation practice she had never experienced such joy and happiness in her life before. So that's something which she actually experienced through meditation.

It is good to acknowledge these great conditions one has now to have come across such practices and to encourage oneself by thinking that

'I'm so fortunate to have met with these practices and teachings' and to again and again remind oneself and rejoice in one's own good fortune. In this way the more we rejoice the more it will help us to not become discouraged and to keep on maintaining a courageous mind of practice. A practical benefit of rejoicing is said to be whenever we rejoice in a positive deed we have done it will increase the positive effects of those positive deeds and so it is a way to increase virtues. Then dedication is said to be a practice which will secure whatever virtues one has accumulated so it does not dissipate or go to waste. Dedication secures it and rejoicing increases it. That might be sufficient for tonight.

Day 2

Let's begin by sitting comfortably in a relaxed posture. Prior to engaging in any virtuous activity it is paramount that we set up a positive motivation. The refuge and bodhicitta prayer that we did earlier will suffice for the motivation. Going for refuge is not just a Buddhist practice. In fact, it is a common practice in all religions. However, from the Buddhist point of view refuge is the practice we undertake as a way to protect ourselves from following a wrong path. When we generate bodhicitta that will protect us from pursuing a personal goal, of self-liberation, rather than aiming for the highest goal of enlightenment.

The objects that we take refuge in are The Buddha, The Dharma and The Sangha. We can take note here that unlike some other traditions where they might have only one object of refuge, Buddhism is a little uncommon in that there are three objects of refuge. The meaning of taking refuge in accordance with each tradition is making the commitment to follow that tradition. In many religions they have an object of refuge, then based on the act of going for refuge other practices follow. In the Buddhist tradition the practice is to adopt non-violence and refrain from harming any living being. Taking refuge is the basis on which one engages in these practices.

When the incomparably kind Buddha gave his very first teaching, it was based on how we should refrain from harming others. Therefore, we can safely say that the Buddha's teachings are based on the morality of refraining from killing, hurting or harming others.

In terms of generating a positive motivation, if one is still not familiar with the actual practices of taking refuge and generating bodhicitta, what would suffice is the simple way that I regularly present, which I personally cultivate and find very helpful in my daily practice, that is to generate the thought that, 'I will do my utmost to benefit other beings by bringing them happiness, and at the very least I will not harm any sentient being'. On the basis of this thought one further generates this determination, 'I will help to remove the sufferings of all sentient beings'. Just generating this thought in itself can bring such a positive state of mind and a real sense of solace within oneself and then we feel a real purpose and meaning of our existence.

We can now spend a few moments in meditation generating in our mind, the thought that 'to the best of my ability I will only engage in actions and deeds which will benefit other beings and bring them happiness, and I will not harm or hurt any living beings and based on that I will do whatever I can to remove the sufferings of other sentient beings'. Let us cultivate this thought in our minds for a few moments now. (Pause for meditation)

I have previously presented the details of the actual sitting posture for meditation and the state of mind that we need to develop, so based on that we can then engage in meditation practices such as generating these positive thoughts. It would be highly meaningful to familiarise ourselves with these thoughts as much as we can so as to really cultivate the basis for having a genuine sense of love and compassion in our hearts. Due to familiarity with this positive state of mind we can begin to feel a real sense of transformation taking place within ourselves. In my own experience I can see that when I go out and meet with other people, or just see them,

they start to appear as friends. Anyone that you encounter, even though they might not have that intention in their mind or express anything to you, but just from your own side, you will be able to see them as friends. When we go out and about, if we have that attitude in our mind towards whoever we encounter, it will bring real joy and ease to our minds.

By paying attention to generating and cultivating this positive state of mind, and becoming more and more familiar with it, the more we will embody that sentiment within ourselves and the more it will bring a sense of real joy and fulfilment within us. Therefore, as I regularly emphasise this positive state of mind, based on love and compassion is the real companion. It is the real inner friend. When one has paid attention to developing this inner companion, which brings a sense of joy within us at all times, then we will not have to be completely reliant on external friends. We will not be at the mercy of always having to be an external friend in order to feel a sense of joy and fulfilment within ourselves.

When this inner friend is intact then if we are surrounded by external friends that is great, but even if we are at an occasion where we don't have external friends within the vicinity, we will still feel a sense of joy. If we lack the inner joy that comes with this positive state of mind, what I call the inner companion, then even if we do have external friends bringing us some sense of enjoyment and fulfilment for a while, when separation takes place that can cause a great sense of discomfort and angst in the mind. If we lack the inner sense of joy and happiness, then that agony and pain can seem very intense. I cannot say that I know this from my own experience as I haven't experienced the sorrow in my mind of being separated from a close companion or friend. However, others have confided in me that their sense of loss and the sense of sorrow that they have felt within themselves is really intense.

Normally I share what others have related to me as their experience, but if I keep on talking about the agony and sorrow of a separation, it may be presumptuous from my side since I haven't had that experience myself.

However, that is why I normally point out that while I personally do not have that experience many others do, and it seems that the pain and sorrow of separation is really quite strong and can weigh down the mind. This sorrow and agony doesn't benefit us in any way. Therefore, if we pay attention to maintaining that inner friend at all times we can enjoy the companionship of our external friends when we are with them, but even if they are not around that's fine too, as we can still maintain a sense of joy and happiness within ourselves. These are significant points to consider.

It is good to also reflect on the practical benefits we can gain from cultivating positive states of mind such as love and compassion. When our mind is in a positive state and imbued with love and compassion that will even improve our sleep. Since sleep is meant to rejuvenate us so that we wake up refreshed, if we are in a positive state of mind before going to bed that will definitely secure a very sound sleep where we will wake up in a positive, refreshed state of mind. However, if we have a negative state of mind prior to going to sleep, such as agitation, annoyance or feeling upset or angry, then our sleep will not be very sound and the sleep pattern will be disturbed so that we won't feel very refreshed or in a clear state of mind when we wake up the next day.

If the negative state of mind is very severe such as extreme anger, then it might be hard to even get to sleep at all. Therefore, this is one practical way to see how working on developing and maintaining a positive mind is something that will really benefit us in every aspect of our life. When we recognise what are the positive states of mind to be cultivated and developed further and what are the negative states of mind which we need to try to become less familiar with, then this recognition and understanding will help us to further develop those good qualities that are helpful or beneficial for our well-being, and to minimise the negative states of mind which are detrimental to our well-being.

It is in this way that we can get the practical benefits. These are just some points that I like to refresh and share with you, however I feel I need to start getting into the text otherwise I'll get side-tracked. What I also like to share regularly as a practical method to deal with our state of mind is, for example with a negative state of mind such as anger, which we all recognise as being a disturbing state of mind. When for whatever reason we are getting upset, rather than fuelling it by focusing on the object causing the distress and justifying our anger, we can immediately recognise the negative state of mind arising and think about the disadvantages of allowing this anger to remain and increase, as this will only bring more suffering and unhappiness for ourselves and others. This way of thinking about the disadvantages of anger and also thinking about the advantages of not allowing our mind to be in that state will lead us to taking the initiative to adopt the next part of the technique which is to temporarily forget about the object that causes our anger and think about something more positive. When we practise meditation that is exactly what we are doing. It is the practice of familiarising our mind with something positive.

Others have related to me that they actually look at the state of mind that they are in. If it is anger, then they actually look and identify what is anger and ask if there are any positive attributes to anger or are there some negative attributes of anger. Can it be something useful or helpful? This actually is a genuine method which is presented in some other teachings, such as the Mahamudra i.e. The Great Seal teachings. This teaching indicates that looking at a negative or discursive state of mind and identifying it can help to reduce that discursive state of mind. Therefore, by looking at it and analysing it, it will actually defuse the intensity of that negative state of mind.

It might be useful to know these methods and techniques because when we are in a negative state of mind and feel stuck, then being presented with these techniques can allow us to think that if there is a method for us to reduce the intensity of that negative state of mind then why not

apply it to help us to be in a clearer state of mind? While we may not be able to completely overcome and eradicate the negative state of mind right now, we still have the means to reduce the intensity and not be so totally overwhelmed by it. Thus it is in our best interests and it is contributing to our well-being that we apply these methods, and that is why I share some of these methods.

The practice that we are explaining here, known as the Giving and Taking practice, or Tonglen in Tibetan, is first of all a mental practice which we engage in to familiarise our state of mind with love, compassion and generosity. Based on love and compassion, when we familiarise our mind well with a thought of giving then when an actual circumstance arises where someone needs something that we are capable of giving, we will have no hesitation to actually give and be generous. If we find that we are not able to give to others easily that is because we are not yet familiar with the mind of generosity. Therefore, these practices are ways of training our mind and acquainting ourselves with giving and being generous so that it can be put into practice whenever the suitable time arises.

The Tonglen text reads that we recite the verse from the Guru Puja three times while combining it with the following visualisation – *In front of myself, I visualise all suffering beings in the aspect of my own mother.*

The Verse,
And thus, O Venerable Compassionate Gurus,
we seek your blessings,
That all karmic debts, obstacles and sufferings
Of mother beings, may without exception,
ripen upon us right now
And that we may give our happiness and virtue to others
And thereby invest all beings in bliss.

With the first recitation: *I visualise that every type of suffering of all mother sentient beings is leaving their right nostril in the aspect of black*

light, which enters into one's own left nostril. The black light flows down to the centre of my heart where, in the form of a black heap, the evil attitude of self-cherishing is located. Just as a small heap of dust is completely cleared and washed away when a strong jet of water is directed onto it similarly, as the black light from all mother sentient beings flows into myself, the attitude of self-cherishing at my heart is completely eliminated. Simultaneously, I take in the samsaric sufferings of all mother sentient beings.

The reason why the practice is presented first with this verse which reads,

*And thus, O Venerable Compassionate Gurus,
we seek your blessings,
That all karmic debts, obstacles and sufferings
Of mother beings, may without exception,
ripen upon us right now
And that we may give our happiness and virtue to others
And thereby invest all beings in bliss.*

is because when one does this recitation the practice is structured so that firstly we familiarise ourselves with the words themselves. This is a verse that can be memorised. By reciting the words, the meaning of the verse becomes clear in our minds and we start to think about the meaning and then we do the practice. Therefore, the words are recited in the verse and then we do the following meditation during and after the recitation. I have already read one part of the taking practice earlier.

In relation to the verse itself, where it reads '*And thus, Venerable Compassionate Gurus, we seek your blessings*', this particular verse comes from another practice called The Offering to the Teacher or The Guru Puja. In accordance with this practice the visualisation is that we first visualise the aspect of the teacher in the form of Lama Tsongkhapa and then in the heart of Lama Tsongkhapa we visualise Buddha Shakyamuni and at the heart of Buddha Shakyamuni we visualise the deity Vajradara.

Therefore, when we make this supplication we are imagining making supplication to the embodiment of the Guru and the Buddha and the Deity all in one. However, if we are not familiar with this practice then we could visualise Buddha Shakyamuni if we have a strong affinity with the Buddha. Also we could visualise any other aspect of the enlightened being that we are familiar with, to give the blessing to be able to do this practice.

As mentioned in our session yesterday evening the practice requires us to visualise all beings in front of us. The reason why the visualisation here is in the aspect of our own mother is because it is a way to remember the kindness of all sentient beings. Just as our own mother has been extremely kind to us in this life by giving birth to us, nourishing, protecting and providing for our needs, likewise each and every other living being has also been extremely kind to us. By visualising being surrounded by all living beings we remember their kindness and they appear to us as appealing and we willingly wish to benefit and help them.

Having visualised all beings in the aspect of very kind beings surrounding us we also visualise that they are experiencing various types of sufferings that they do not wish to experience and while they wish to experience happiness they are deprived of happiness. Just as we would not wish to experience any kind of misery or suffering, likewise all other living creatures also do not wish to experience this and just as we want to experience every kind of happiness likewise all other living beings also wish to experience happiness. However sentient beings, at this time right now, are experiencing various types of sufferings and by acknowledging that we develop a strong wish for them to be free of those sufferings. We are then cultivating what is called compassion towards sentient beings. Likewise, when we contemplate the plight of sentient beings who are deprived of happiness we develop a strong keen wish for all beings to be endowed with happiness and we are then generating what is called love towards sentient beings. It is in this way that we cultivate love and compassion focused on sentient beings.

As presented here in the text what we are visualising at the centre of our chest is a black heap. It is like a black ball of light which represents our own self-cherishing mind and the selfish attitude within us. If we are not moved or inclined to help others when we contemplate their suffering and their deprivation of happiness the reason is because of our self-cherishing mind within us. This is what is causing us to hesitate and to not feel moved to help others. This self-cherishing mind which is self-centredness, is not helpful at all. Therefore, as the practice suggests we imagine that the black light which comes in from sentient beings goes into our heart and destroys that self-cherishing attitude. This self-cherishing attitude is one which develops from the feeling of needing more and more and never being satisfied.

To relate an example of how this kind of mind is never satiated, I've heard of a lady, I think she is from the Philippines, who was apparently quite wealthy and she had about four thousand pairs of shoes (student suggests it could be Imelda Marcos) You know of her and that she was the president's wife. Even though she had four thousand pairs of shoes she still wanted more (student says it is six thousand). Maybe it had increased since I heard about it. (laughter)

Having generated a strong wish that all beings may be free from suffering and that they may be endowed with happiness this can be developed further to the point where the love and compassion becomes so strong, and the sufferings and deprivation of others becomes so unbearable, that one wants to do something to remove the sufferings of other sentient beings and lead them to happiness oneself. When we develop this intention where we want to take that personal responsibility to free other beings from all sufferings and lead them to ultimate happiness we have then developed what is called Superior Intention.

Therefore, when our mind has reached such a stage there will be no hesitation in taking in the sufferings of other beings so that they do

not have to experience it themselves and then giving all our happiness to other beings so that they can be endowed with happiness. The practice is done in such a way that when we receive the sufferings of other sentient beings in the form of a black light, we have already visualised the self-cherishing attitude in our heart and the black light comes down and completely destroys this. It is said to be important to do this part of the visualisation quite accurately because as we become familiar with taking in sufferings we might reach a point where we feel no hesitation taking in the sufferings but if it is left within ourselves it might cause some unease in the mind and it can cause some disturbance later on. Therefore, the black light actually serves only as a means to shatter that self-cherishing attitude where it is completely dissipated and there is nothing left. It is explained that the black light itself as well as the self-cherishing attitude is completely dissipated, leaving no trace behind.

So that is the taking part of the practice where one is taking in the sufferings of other sentient beings. We particularly emphasise the generating of compassion for other sentient beings because compassion is the sentiment or the mind where one cannot bear others to suffer. Whereas love, as described in the teachings, is where one cannot bear others to be deprived of happiness and wishing them to be happy. Therefore, in giving one is actually further developing and cultivating that love for other beings.

When giving what we own to others it can be summarised into three main things which are our body, our wealth or possessions, and our merits or virtues. In the giving part of the first recitation, I will add further that in the visualisation when we take in the black light leaving sentient being's right nostril and it enters into our left nostril that is because in the visualisation we are imagining that we are surrounded by the living beings who are facing us and we are facing outwards. Now to continue with the practice.

With giving: *I visualise giving my own precious human body with the Eight Freedoms and Ten Endowments, transforming it into wish-fulfilling bodies...*

The wish-fulfilling bodies here are analogous to a wish-fulfilling jewel. So it is not saying that our bodies actually transform into wish-fulfilling jewels, but rather if we were to have that jewel all our needs would be fulfilled. It can remove poverty and so forth because it actually has the value to rid us of all things which we don't want and provides whatever we need. Similarly, we imagine our body becoming like a wish-fulfilling jewel, a wish-fulfilling body, that helps to provide whatever other sentient beings need. Here we can take an example from Shantideva's text where he says that when we give to others we are giving what they need and are deprived of, such as food in the case of those suffering from pangs of hunger. We provide help and relief from that immediate suffering when we imagine offering food. When someone is experiencing great thirst and we provide drink then that will remove the suffering they are experiencing. Similarly, with lack of clothing and deprivation of companionship we imagine giving actual clothes and companions. In this way, as explained extensively in Shantideva's text, we are imagining that our bodies transform into those aspects which provide whatever they need. We continue the visualisation with giving in the first recitation

... that leave my right nostril in the aspect of white light. This then enters into the left nostril of all mother sentient beings. As the white light dissolves into every sentient being, it simultaneously removes all the defects of their bodies; thus transforming their bodies into perfect bodies that are endowed with the four wheels of the supreme vehicle. They are then led to the state of precious human rebirths, enabling them to fully practise the Dharma.

As indicated in the practice this is done by reciting the verse. The first time we recite the verse this is the visualisation we do. We can now take a moment here to recite the verse and do the meditation.

*And thus, O Venerable Compassionate Gurus,
we seek your blessings
That all karmic debts, obstacles and sufferings
Of mother beings, may without exception,
ripen upon us right now
And that we may give our happiness and virtue to others
And thereby invest all beings in bliss.*

Pause for visualisation.

We don't have much time to go into detail about the meditation however this is the manner in which we can start to incorporate it into our daily practice. Others have confided in me that they find this practice very useful and beneficial. Also when they have suggested it to others who are experiencing some difficulties it has been very useful for them as well. When we come to the end of the second recitation we do this following visualisation:

I visualise the cause of Samsara, karma and delusions, specifically the origination of suffering which are the eighty-four thousand delusions and all its gross and subtlest aspects leaving their right nostril in the aspect of black light. It comes forth and enters into my own left nostril. As it enters into my body, it simultaneously transforms into lightning bolts and hailstones. Then, just as rocks and mountains are smashed into minuscule particles when lightning strikes, similarly the evil attitude of self-cherishing at the centre of my heart is completely destroyed, leaving no trace behind. Simultaneously, I take in the origin of suffering from all mother sentient beings.

And then, with giving: *I visualise giving the virtuous results of generosity accumulated in all my previous lifetimes, which leaves my right nostril in the aspect of white light. This transforms my own resources such as food, wealth, housing, text books and so forth into all types of necessities for sentient beings, such as material wealth and the like. In short, everything*

I own is transformed into a space-like treasure-house that I give to all mother sentient beings; this then leads them to the perfect state of having all the necessary conditions to practise the Dharma. Thus, all sentient beings are endowed with the wealth and resources that equal the wealth of Brahma.

In this second part of the practice, having previously taken in the sufferings, the visualisation of taking now goes even further in taking the very causes of what is called samsara. The very existence of the suffering that sentient beings are in is explained here as karma and delusions. Karma is the actions motivated by the delusions which then become the cause for samsara. As explained in the teachings the origination of suffering are the eighty-four thousand delusions. A few of the main delusions are attachment, anger, ignorance, pride and jealousy. These are some of the ones that we can identify right away as being causes of misery. Anger and jealousy immediately cause so much suffering in the mind, but what is being mentioned here is that these delusions become the cause for samsaric existence as well and all the sufferings that are experienced in that. Therefore, we are taking upon ourselves these delusions in their gross and subtlest aspects. They leave the right nostril of sentient beings and enter into us and thus the self-cherishing attitude within us is destroyed.

Here we take time to acknowledge that the delusions are the cause of the various types of sufferings. Based on the responsibility we have developed of wanting to remove the sufferings of all sentient beings, not only the sufferings themselves but the very causes of those sufferings, that mind of compassion towards all sentient beings is further strengthened and thus we take their unwanted causes of suffering upon ourselves.

To repeat part of the relevant verse in the taking part after the second recitation, *'It comes forth and enters into my own left nostril and as it enters into my body, it simultaneously transforms into lightning bolts and hailstones. Then, just as rocks and mountains are smashed into*

minuscule particles when lightning strikes, similarly the evil attitude of self-cherishing at the centre of my heart is completely destroyed, leaving no trace behind.

In the second part of the practice in this section we imagine giving our resources, wealth and so forth. As mentioned here, *'I visualise giving the virtuous result of generosity accumulated in all my previous lifetimes.* Whatever wealth, resources or possessions we may have now are the result of having engaged in generosity in past lifetimes. Everything we own leaves our right nostril in the aspect of white light and as that white light leaves our right nostril we simultaneously imagine it as our own actual resources *such as food, wealth, housing, text books and all types of necessities for sentient beings.* Whatever we own that can be of benefit for other sentient beings is included. *'In short, everything I own is transformed into a space-like treasure-house that I give to all mother sentient beings.* The analogy of a space-like treasure-house is that as we are giving we imagine that there is no limit to how much we can give. As we give to others we have more to give and therefore we unceasingly give to each and every living being satisfying whatever immediate needs they may have. Though the Virtue of Generosity has been emphasised, here we give many of our virtues such as the virtues of avoiding all the Ten Non-Virtues.

The virtues which are mentioned here such as generosity are actually the result of those virtues that one has. Whatever we possess now is the result of our previous positive actions and the virtues we have accumulated, such as generosity and avoiding the Ten Non-Virtues. Thus we are able to give unceasingly to satisfy the needs of sentient beings. As mentioned in the practice, *'this then leads them to the perfect state of having all the necessary conditions to practise the Dharma.* Therefore, what is being specified here is that the material objects that we give to sentient beings do not become an aid to cause more afflictions in their mind or become the cause for more attachment and anger and so forth to develop, but rather that it

becomes a means for them to further develop themselves and practice the Dharma.

'Thus all sentient beings are endowed with the wealth and resources that equal the wealth of Brahma.'

We can now recite the verse again. We recite it slowly as a way to focus on the meaning and then when we pause afterwards we try to visualise as explained in the teaching here,

*And thus, O Venerable Compassionate Gurus,
we seek your blessings
That all karmic debts, obstacles and sufferings
Of mother beings, may without exception, ripen
upon us right now,
And that we may give our happiness and virtue to others
And thereby invest all beings in bliss.*

Pause for visualisation.

We can now go to the third part of the practice. At the end of the third recitation: *I visualise all obscurations to omniscience within the minds of sentient beings leaving through their right nostril in the aspect of black light. It comes forth and enters into my own left nostril, simultaneously transforming into forms of ferocious creatures such as bears, tigers, leopards, scorpions, poisonous frogs, snakes and the like. These creatures descend towards the evil attitude of self-cherishing at the centre of my heart. Then, just as vultures devour flesh, these ferocious creatures completely devour and consume the evil attitude of self-cherishing, which is in the form of a black heap at the centre of my heart, thus completely destroying it and leaving no trace behind.*

Then with giving: *I visualise giving my own virtues of the three times, which include virtues yet to be accumulated, from engaging in the*

practices of listening, contemplating and meditating, as well as the virtues of the three higher trainings. My virtues are in the aspect of white light which leaves my right nostril and enters into the left nostril of all sentient beings. They quickly and effortlessly achieve all the realisations beginning from 'proper reliance on the Guru', all the way through to the final stage of 'unification on the path of no more learning'. Thus, all mother sentient beings become fully enlightened Buddhas.

To explain the practice of giving away our virtues, where it specifically mentions the virtues of the three times, that means because virtues are in our mental continuum, the virtues that we have accumulated in the past, the virtues that we are accumulating now as well as the virtues that we may accumulate in the future, are called the virtues of the three times. Thus we can give all of our virtues of all three times, those accumulated in the past, those being accumulated in the present and those to be accumulated in the future. So this is unlike the giving of our body and possessions. With our body, of course, we can only give the body that we have now. With possessions such as food we can give whatever food we have now and we can dedicate whatever food we may get in the future to others, but food which we have already consumed in the past is not something that we can give. This is why it is specifically mentioned that the giving of virtue includes the virtues of all three times.

In the third part of the practice of taking it says, *'I visualise all obscurations to omniscience within the minds of sentient beings leaving through their right nostril in the aspect of black light.'* The obscurations to omniscience are the imprints of the delusions. The delusions which were mentioned earlier include anger, jealousy, pride, ignorance and so forth. We may reach a stage where we have overcome the delusions yet the imprints of those delusions still remain in our mind. It is those remaining imprints that obscure our mind from becoming omniscient, enlightened, and all-knowing.

As long as the imprints of the delusions are in the minds of sentient beings there will still be subtle levels of misconceptions present which cause distorted views and appearances and so forth. Therefore, what we are visualising here is taking those very subtle imprints of the delusions. Thus in the taking part of this third section we do the similar visualisation as before by taking in the black light. In this part the black light is transformed into fierce creatures as a means to destroy the self-cherishing attitude within our heart. As we do this visualisation the self-cherishing attitude is completely shattered and nothing remains within ourselves.

Then with the giving part of the practice we say, *'I visualise giving my own virtues of the three times, which include virtues yet to be accumulated, from engaging in the practices of listening, contemplating and meditating'*. This includes virtues we have accumulated by listening to the teachings or reading books and so forth, contemplating and thinking about them and meditating on them. The practice continues with *'as well as the virtues of the three higher trainings'*. These are in the footnotes as the training of moral discipline, the training of concentrating and the training of wisdom. All of these virtues in the aspect of white light leave our right nostril and enter into the left nostril of sentient beings.

The virtues that we have accumulated in the past could be from last year, the year before or even past lives. So whatever virtues we have ever created in the past we imagine giving that as well as the virtues of the present and the future. When giving those virtues to sentient beings we imagine, *'it enters into the left nostril of all sentient beings. They quickly and effortlessly achieve all the realisations beginning from proper reliance on the Guru, all the way through to the final stage of unification on the path of no more learning. Thus, all mother sentient beings become fully enlightened Buddhas.'* This is the essential stage where we contemplate on how we had earlier made pledges and taken personal responsibility to lead all beings to the ultimate state of happiness which is enlightenment. Just as we intended, we can now meditate on imagining that sentient beings have actually reached that stage of full enlightenment and thus

they are free from all forms of sufferings. Then we can feel a great sense of joy in our heart thinking 'that now, just as I had wished, it has actually happened. How wonderful and incredible it is that all beings have reached that final stage of enlightenment'. So in this way one develops that strong intention.

Now we can again recite the verse together and then do the visualisation.

*And thus, O Venerable Compassionate Gurus,
we seek your blessings
That all karmic debts, obstacles and sufferings
Of mother beings, may without exception
ripen upon us right now,
And that we may give our happiness and virtue to others
And thereby invest all beings in bliss.*

Pause for visualisation

With the limited time we have had this has been a brief explanation of the practice. As a summary I would like to mention that with this practice of giving our body, our wealth and possessions and our merits and virtues, our purpose in reciting this verse is to familiarise our mind with this attitude again and again. The author of this practice is giving the advice that after becoming familiar with these sentiments in our meditation by visualising them again and again, we then put it into practice to the best of our ability and actually practice being generous to others.

Explaining further on the subject of giving our body, while we may not yet be able to give our body to the extent that the great noble beings, the bodhisattvas of the past have offered their bodies to others, the practice we can engage in is offering our physical exertion to help others to the best of our ability in whatever way we can. While engaging in benefiting others in this way we also commit to not harming other beings in the slightest way. Furthermore, by practising introspection, which is the

maintaining of mindfulness and vigilance in our mind, we always try to benefit others in any way and avoid hurting them. We try to avoid harming in both our thoughts and our actions. That is how we need to practice and engage in the means and ways to benefit others in whatever possible way.

Also when we see other sentient beings in whatever occasion, we immediately try to remember that these are the beings who are extremely kind to us. They are extremely kind to us because it is by relying on these very sentient beings that we will obtain the ultimate state of enlightenment ourselves. Thus we regard them as the fields of merit and always hold them in love and compassion. We then contemplate again and again that benefiting and bringing joy to these sentient being is the optimum way to please all the Buddhas.

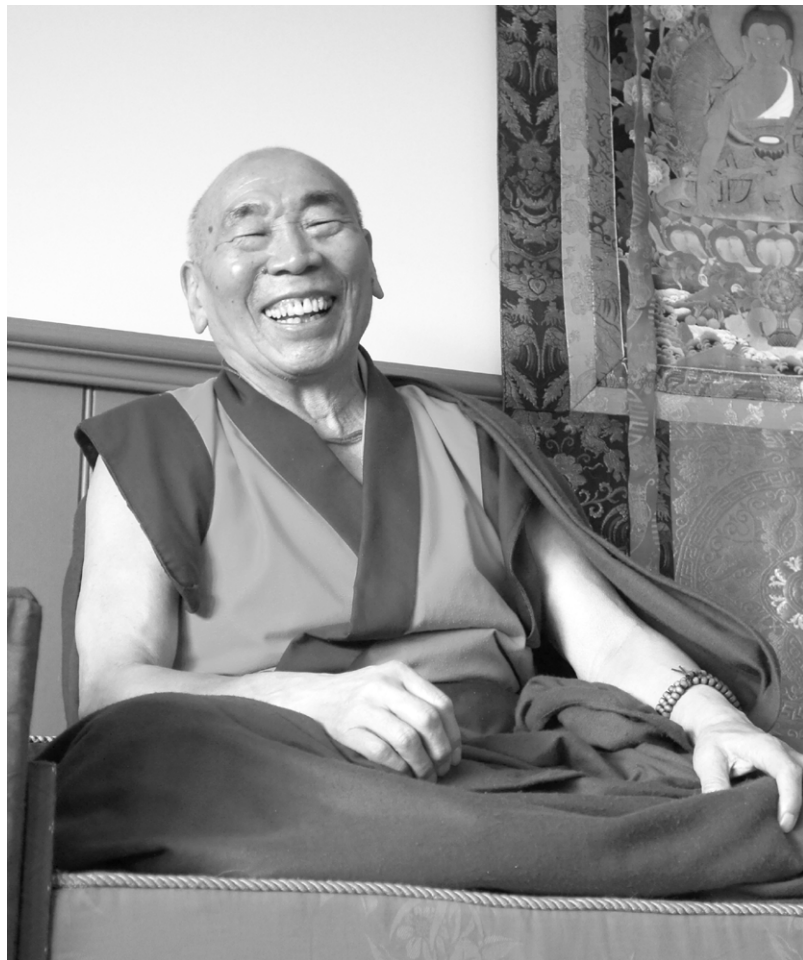
This explanation is followed by the quote from Shantideva's famous text on the Bodhisattva's Way of Life where it reads, 'By merely seeing sentient beings immediately I'll remember that it is by relying on these sentient beings that I will achieve enlightenment.' Thus it is with this attitude of love and compassion that we see sentient beings.

So does that cover the practices? (Geshela laughs) I'd like to thank you for listening so well. You all paid very good attention. I've tried to present it with the best intentions and positive motivations in my mind, I hope that you get some benefit from these words, and if so then it would have served its purpose. It definitely benefited me, there is no question about that. The way that it benefits me is that it reminds me that just as I'm saying these nice words of the practice to others, if I didn't practise it myself then how could I please the Buddhas? It would be presumptuous to teach the practice to others but not follow it myself. That would be a disgrace and wouldn't please the Buddhas at all. Therefore, I am reminded to make an effort myself to actually put it into practice the best way I can as well.

I feel it is noteworthy to mention this because it shows how through our connection we benefit each other. Because the teacher has more knowledge than those who are listening, sharing that understanding and knowledge benefits the students, but while helping the students to understand that further reminds the teacher to also put it into practice. In this way we find that even in a teaching session there is mutual benefit. This is true in all other circumstances, when we benefit others we may benefit ourselves and this is how we can help each other on all occasions. It is good to think about these points.

Something to keep within oneself to help generate the positive state of mind is to make a daily dedication and commitment in the morning when we wake up to generate the thought, 'I will only benefit anyone that I encounter today and I'll not intentionally harm any living being that I encounter'. With that thought in mind we always try to remember it with mindfulness and introspection. It would be very helpful and would bring great solace and benefit to our minds if that could be our first thought when we wake up in the morning. When we wake up, and even before we get out of bed, we could spend a few moments just thinking about these points and generating that thought in our mind. When we generate those thoughts it really can bring about a great sense of ease and a happy state of mind. You can try it out and you might notice that on a morning you remember to do this it may lead to a day unlike other days with something positive coming of it.

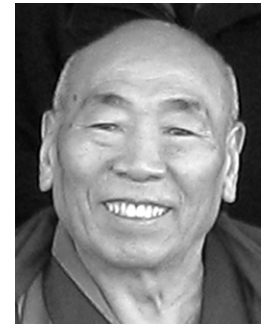
Again I'd like to show my appreciation for all the wonderful arrangements you have made. Due to these efforts we can see the result that many were able to come and participate and may have benefited. Just to give an example, my bedroom, I wouldn't be able to get such a nice room in any hotel even if I paid for it.



Venerable Geshe Doga teaching in Warrnambool

Love and compassion in daily life

Day 1, 2016



I am very pleased to meet you all again and indeed whenever we meet someone that we know, that we consider a friend or companion we get that nice feeling that is a reflection of an inner quality. And also I'm particularly happy and pleased with the practice that you have mentioned that you do regularly, that is something which is very nice. In relation to the topic presented this evening 'Love and Compassion in Everyday Life', this is in fact the practice that you have said you are doing. The practice of Tonglen, which is a Giving and Taking practice, is in fact the essence of putting love and compassion into practice. It is the essential practice of a Bodhisattva, the noble beings who have vowed to work for sentient beings. So this is really putting love and compassion into actual practice.

The reason why this is the 'pith' practice of love and compassion is because it is a practice where one generates a strong aspiration to take the responsibility to benefit other sentient beings, based on love and compassion. Love, as defined in the Buddhist teachings as the aspirational wish to place beings in happiness, and compassion is defined as the aspirational wish for other beings to be completely free from suffering. When one does the Giving and Taking practice, (known as

the Tonglen practice in Tibetan), one is actively engaging in the mental training of taking the suffering of other beings upon oneself, and giving one's own happiness to them. So this is where one is taking personal responsibility and it becomes the very core and essential practice.

What we need to take note of is that love and compassion are not something random in living beings, all humans have the basis of love and compassion, it is an inborn quality. However, we need to further strengthen that love and compassion. This practice of Giving and Taking would be a supreme practice, an optimum practice of love and compassion. In fact, when we really think about our ultimate wishes, they can be combined into these two basic factors. Every being, naturally wants to be happy and be free from every kind of misery or suffering, this is a wish that we all share.

Whoever takes it upon themselves as a commitment to assist others to gain happiness and be free from suffering will be doing a wondrous deed. Even in general terms we would all agree that anyone who assists someone to achieve their goals would be someone who is offering really good assistance. So someone who is committed to assisting others to achieve their ultimate goals, is indeed offering the best possible assistance and help. We make ourselves busy in our lives engaging in various things and the means of acquiring our needs, and ultimately if we were to come down to what our needs are, it comes down to wanting to be happy, and free from any adverse conditions or suffering. So to be inclined to assist others, in the best way, in achieving their ultimate goals of being ultimately happy and being completely free from suffering is definitely the most noble intention or deed.

It is good for us to really acknowledge this fact that we all wish to be happy and want to be free from suffering. Acknowledging this as a fact and contemplating this can really help us to develop a genuine sense of unbiased love and compassion towards all, because everyone shares that same wish. If you don't think in this way on a larger scope, if we are

left to our ordinary level of thinking we would find that we are mostly obsessed with our own interests, with our own personal happiness, and getting rid of our own personal suffering regardless of what others may be going through.

Usually we resort to our very ordinary level of thinking of fulfilling only our own interests and well-being, thinking only about our personal happiness, getting rid of troubles just for ourselves and engaging in activities to achieve that end. If we were to actually obtain that goal of a genuine sense of happiness and well-being, getting rid of difficulties and problems, then we could say that it would be reasonable to maintain that sort of attitude. However, we may all experience the feeling that we don't really achieve that state, we don't seem to achieve a genuine sense of happiness and well-being. This being the reality it is good for us to reflect on why that is so. Why are we not achieving the happiness and well-being that we constantly seek? Our intentions of wanting happiness for ourselves and being free from suffering cause us to engage in many different means and methods to achieve this.

However, from the Buddhist point of view, when we seek happiness just for ourselves based only on our personal interests, this actually leads us into creating negative karma. That is because when we are focused only on our own personal self interest, this initiates attitudes and states of mind where in order to gain our own interests, we might not hesitate in having contempt for others, engaging in negativities by putting others down, also at times feeling jealous of others when they are seemingly doing better, feeling a sense of competitiveness and thus harbouring pride as well. When we initiate these thoughts in relation to others it leads to negative states of mind or ill will towards others. That is how we create negative karma with consequences of destroying rather than gaining our own happiness and well-being.

The extent that some people go to create negativity for personal gain is quite obvious. We can definitely see that there are many who might

go to the extent of really engaging in grave negative acts such as killing and so forth. There is so much destruction going on, and this all stems from a lack of genuine love and compassion for others. When there's lack of love and compassion then the others' interests are not taken into consideration and thus exploitation of others takes place. Engaging in such harmful actions is the creation of negative karma. Thus when we see that all these negativities arise from a lack of love and compassion, we can see how essential it is for one to develop love and compassion because it prevents us from creating these negativities and ensures we have genuine concern for others well-being.

When we lack a genuine sense of love and compassion in our hearts, then the consequences are that we will not be able to utilise the great potential that we have to benefit others. We all have the potential and capacity to benefit others to some extent. But what actually prevents us from benefiting others is our lack of love and compassion for them, which is specifically a lack of interest in others' happiness and a wish for them to be free of suffering. When we lack a genuine concern for others to be happy and to be free from suffering then we lack the initiative to try to benefit them. While we may have the potential to benefit them, what prevents us from benefiting them is that lack of concern for the other. In this way, we can see how love and compassion become the essential tools to fully utilise our potential to benefit others. What prevents us from expressing our genuine concern for others, and further enhancing love and compassion in our heart, is the afflictions in our minds. In summary it's because of an unsubdued mind. Now it is relevant to relate this to the importance of the meditation practice as a means to subdue the mind.

We are all quite intelligent, we can see that all the faults that arise and make us engage in negativities or making mistakes in life are because of an unsubdued mind. This is something that we can actually recognise, it is not something too obscure, if we were to look honestly within ourselves we can see that. When we can see an unsubdued mind

harbours ill feelings and various forms of afflictions, we can see that if we were to be free from that and the mind was subdued; for example if we were free from jealousy, we can see how much happier our life would be. If we were free from anger how much happier our life would be. If we were free from pride, or our pride was reduced, how much happier we would be.

Thus likewise with attachments, if we were free from strong desires and attachment how much happier our life would be. This is something we begin to recognise. So the meditation practice, as I will be explaining later, is a method to familiarise the mind and focus on the virtuous objects. So when we maintain the focus on the virtuous object it will reduce negativity from arising in our minds.

When we reflect in this way we see the consequences of an unsubdued mind versus the great benefits of a subdued mind. This reflection and acknowledgement is actually a way of increasing our great inborn insight and intelligence called 'wisdom'. So with this wisdom we begin to acknowledge to ourselves that if we do not subdue our own minds and make an attempt to overcome these negative states of mind we will experience the ill consequences. If we make a genuine attempt to overcome these negativities in our minds the benefits are reaped upon ourselves, we will have happier states of mind.

So far what I am relating to you is something that you already know. It's a little bit of a human predicament that while we may know what is good for ourselves, and often we might reflect on it in hindsight, we don't really take much heed in implementing it. This is a fault that we may have, thus what I am presenting here is a way to really acknowledge, to embrace this truth for ourselves. This acknowledgement, along with the initiative to take action for ourselves, for our own well-being comes from the wisdom that we all have. The more secular term is intelligence, but from the Buddhist point of view we talk about wisdom which is a deeper sense of intelligence. Whether we utilise this wisdom or not is something

that we need to be really mindful of, because although as humans we naturally have this wisdom, if it is not utilised in the proper way it can become destructive. However, when it is nurtured properly and when it is directed in the proper way through our attitudes, encouragement and the proper way of thinking, then intelligence can really work towards bettering our lives.

Although I intended to start with a bit of a meditation I've been a bit side-tracked here but we can come back to the meditation. The reason that I emphasise these points is because it is very important that we really think about them and reflect on what I have mentioned earlier in relation to the wisdom or intelligence that that we naturally have. This is the basis to nurture the great potential that we have for well-being and goodness; however, as mentioned earlier when wisdom is not channelled in the proper way it can actually bring about a lot of destruction.

We can see the unfortunate consequences of intelligence used in the wrong way, for example the destructive substances that are made for chemical warfare. It would have required a lot of intelligence and the use of a lot of thought processes to produce these chemicals of mass destruction. It is clear that those who utilised that intelligence would not have been accompanied with any intention to benefit others. Therefore, the intelligence was completely misguided into constructing destructive substances which bring harm to others rather than benefit.

It is very clear that if their intelligence was to be accompanied with a genuine sense of concern and benefit for others, it would have not gone into creating these substances which cause mass destruction. On the other hand, when intelligence is accompanied with some good intentions we can see that the things which are produced can be useful for humankind. We can take the example of aeroplanes. Those who first constructed aeroplanes and improved their mechanism would have again utilised a lot of intelligence and knowledge, but it would have been with some good intentions and we can see that humankind are

benefiting from that, to be able to travel easily and so forth. This is just one example of how when intelligence is used in a proper way it can bring about well-being for others.

This can be also applied to the right technology which benefits others such as medicine and so forth. The point is that when intelligence is accompanied with good intentions it can bring about a positive result, whereas when it is accompanied with selfish motives and negative intentions it can bring about a lot of destruction. Relating that to a personal level, what we need to resolve to do is to acknowledge that we possess this incredible intelligence or wisdom, and we need to ensure in every possible way that our intelligence is utilised in the most proper way to bring about a genuine sense of peace and happiness within oneself, and also as a way to bring about peace and happiness for others. The most proper way to utilise our wisdom is to contribute to others well-being.

In summary it is clear that when we lack love and compassion then the intelligence or wisdom that we have can become destructive for either ourselves or others. Whereas when we do utilise, cultivate and further strengthen love and compassion to that extent that our love and compassion is strengthened. To that degree, our intelligence and wisdom can be utilised in a positive way to be constructive and beneficial for our own and others well-being.

On a more personal level and putting it into practice with our own immediate relations, for example two people as partners or companions living together, when we start to generate a genuine sense of love and compassion for the other, and take the initiative to really do things which are in their interest and do not cause them harm, then we would engage in means and ways to contribute to their happiness and lessen their suffering. When that is expressed from our own side and the other person experiences that from us, then that creates a genuine sense of mutual trust, well-being and harmony. Even on a scale of two people

we can see that this is relevant. Practising genuine love and compassion is crucial for a good, harmonious relationship. Then when we further expand this into our relations, such as between parents and children or between siblings, when we express a true sense of love and compassion for them then that is expressed in ways of actively and consciously thinking, if we do this, it may cause them harm and distress so we will not do it. Rather, if we do this it will make them feel joyful and happy, and we actively engage in ways of doing those things. This is a practical way of how we can begin to practise love and compassion within our own relationships and which brings about genuine well-being.

When I regularly reflect upon these points myself and think, what is really the main contributing factor for happiness in one's life? I've come to the conclusion again and again that what really contributes towards happiness in one's life depends on one's state of mind. If we have a positive state of mind, then that positive state of mind is what actually contributes to a genuine sense of well-being. A genuinely calm, peaceful and happy state of mind is what contributes to a happy life.

Of course to a certain degree we do depend on good external conditions for our well-being, but ultimately the main factor for our well-being, particularly inner well-being and happiness, is not directly related to external material things but the inner qualities of a positive state of mind. It is clear that some who may have abundant material things are still not happy and peaceful inside. That is a clear sign that they're lacking the positive state of mind.

When I go out and about I come across people who I normally don't associate with, but they come up and appreciate seeing me and talk to me and confide in me. There's people who have confided in me some saying that, 'I have my businesses going well, I've got quite a lot of wealth but yet I'm really not happy inside. I really long to be like you that would be wonderful'. And so they seem to acknowledge that while I may not have many material things I appear happy to them, they confide in me

saying that while they have a certain amount of external material success it doesn't necessarily bring about happiness within.

Whereas there's some others who come up to me and share their sentiments, their feelings about what makes life happy, and they say that they don't have a great abundance of wealth and so forth, however they're feeling quite content and happy. They often relate to me saying, 'they must be on the same wave length and what makes me happy also is the spiritual wealth'. This individual came up to me three times to talk to me and was really appreciating talking to me, and then the last time we were talking he said, 'how old are you'? At that time, I was seventy-four, he said, 'I'm fifty-eight but when I saw you and tried to guess your age I thought you would have been maybe fifty-five'.

The main point that I'm emphasising here is we need to really pay careful attention to making every attempt not to lose the good qualities of love and compassion within our hearts. That is something we should not allow to diminish at any cost. Furthermore, the inner state of mind that we call a sense of joy and happiness is something that we definitely must not lose. If we were to lose that, that is the greatest loss that we could ever have in our lives. The sense of love and compassion followed by the sense of joy and happiness in our mind are the qualities that are the best companion that we could ever have. This is something I regularly emphasise to everyone in my normal classes, and also to people that may not be coming to my talks regularly. If they just come up to me for some random advice, when I mention this to them they seem to appreciate it.

Particularly I remember an individual who was suffering from a terminal cancer, and when he came up to me and I shared this advice about trying to always remember that love and compassion in one's heart, and joy and happiness in one's mind are the best companion. Regardless of what is going on outside, to try to always keep that in your mind, and he immediately acknowledged that as being most profound advice that he'd ever received. He said, 'I've never heard this before'. This is something

which really brought him a great sense of encouragement, and although later on he did pass away it was very apparent that he was quite joyful after he heard that, and he had a very peaceful death. This is something which has great value, we can see that at every stage of our life the most valuable asset that we could ever possess, utilise and further develop is love and compassion. When we don't lose love and compassion in our heart, we are securing a sense of joy and happiness in our mind as well. This is the main point that I cannot emphasise enough because it is really crucial we all acknowledge and take this to heart.

To again specifically define love and compassion. Love is the state of mind of not being able to bear seeing others deprived of happiness, when we experience that, we are experiencing love towards others. Whereas compassion is where we are not able to bear seeing others undergoing suffering. How love and compassion are defined in the Buddhist teachings is that when we are not able to bear seeing others deprived of happiness we would do everything within our possibility to bring them to a state of happiness. Whereas when we are not able to bear seeing others in suffering then within our own capacity at the time, whatever we are able to do to lead them out of suffering. This initial action of benefiting others comes with that state of mind of feeling love and compassion towards the other.

Of course we can see examples of love and compassion in action to a certain degree, for example even in a worldly context. The best examples of seeing love and compassion in action would be in a parent, and in particular a mother's love and compassion for her newborn child. Many mothers have told me that while there is some hardship and difficulty in caring for the child there's no hesitation in their mind, mentally they're feeling joy and happiness in caring for the child. We can see that the extent that the mother goes through for caring for the child is really phenomenal, mothers would stay up at night, waking up any time during the night to care for the baby, to make sure that they're safe or to feed them or to change nappies and so forth.

So these mothers have told me that even though they may have to wake up many times in the night they don't feel any hesitation, and feel a great sense of joy, love and compassion, and express further that caring for the child teaches them to be more patient, and indeed having to endure such hardships would require a lot of patience. They have expressed that they feel a genuine sense of caring for the newborn child and they can learn much more patience. We can see that there's definitely great physical endurance, hardships and difficulties to be willingly undertaken when one has a genuine sense of love and compassion for others. We can see that love and compassion, when expressed from parent's side, particularly the mother's side to the child, becomes the most effective way to nurture the child. The child also grows up to be healthy, emotionally stable and so forth, really strong and healthy when they're showered with a mother's love and compassion from the beginning.

When we think about the values of love and compassion we can see that it is those with love and compassion who will come to help those in difficulty. For example, in a relationship it is those with a genuine sense of love and compassion who will come to our aid when we are facing difficulties or hardships. If a relationship is only based on attachment (while there are some exceptional cases, or to a certain extent even with attachment there could be some benefit that you could give to others) then usually that does not endure in times of difficulties and hardships and they will start to shy away, they're not the ones who will come to our aid and benefit one. The main point here is to see that when there is a genuine sense of love and compassion it surpasses hardship and difficulties as a way to benefit and take others needs in to consideration.

Our very life is sustained by love and compassion. When we think about what sustained us when we were young, as mentioned earlier, we were completely sustained by the affection, love and compassion that we received from our parents or carers as we grew up. Again it is through a sense of genuine love and compassion and genuine sense of concern from others that helped us to become educated and grow up

to be healthy. Even during our middle life, we are still dependent on others concerns and love and compassion for us, and particularly at the end of our life again we are completely dependent on others' love and compassion. We can clearly see that when our own life is sustained by love and compassion it is reasonable that we take initiative to develop a genuine sense of love and compassion focusing on others. Effectively what makes one a good person? Love and compassion are the qualities which would lead us to be regarded as good people.

Furthermore, for those of us who are interested in the spiritual path such as practising the Dharma and meditation, it is love and compassion which ensures that we are engaging in the right Dharma practice and doing the right meditation. Often people say, 'Oh I'm interested in meditation and the practice of Dharma but what should I do? How should I practise?' One simple answer is when we are ensuring that we are developing love and compassion in our hearts and doing everything possible to develop that, then we can be confident that we are practising the Dharma. If our meditations are focused towards further strengthening our love and compassion we are doing the right meditation. Of course I can say this confidently from the Buddha's point of view, but it is not only related to Buddhist practice, in fact all religions share the same core message of the need for developing love and compassion. This is something which we can see clearly.

A genuine religion would have as its core values a means to better other's lives. Religion is presented as a way to have well-being and a better quality of life, religions would agree upon this. All religions preach extending goodness and well-being to others, and again love and compassion are at the core of this. It is with a genuine sense of love and compassion that we bring goodness and well-being to others and ultimately to ourselves. This is the main point, when we express love and compassion towards others the real beneficiary is ourselves. Therefore, engaging in practices where there is meditation or spiritual practice, then that practice becomes a means to further strengthen

love and compassion, and at the same time to weaken negative states of mind and develop positive states of mind. These are the opposite of the negative states of mind, such as further enhancing a lack of jealousy, a lack of harmfulness or violence towards others, a lack of pride, non attachment and a lack of competitiveness towards others. So these are the positive states of mind which are developed in respect to decreasing the negative and destructive states of mind. These are really the essential practices that we need to focus on because a peaceful state of mind is, as mentioned earlier, the very fundamental foundation of our happiness.

In order to obtain this peaceful state of mind we need to free our mind of these negativities. When we harbour such negative states of mind really there's no redeeming value. Our negative state of mind in itself doesn't directly effect others, by harbouring anger within ourselves the destruction and harm is experienced by us. When you go around with an angry mind, others may not really appreciate having you around them, but nevertheless the real harm that we are causing immediately is to ourselves, this is very clear. So there's no point in harbouring ill will, negative states of mind and negative attitudes towards others because it doesn't create any direct harm to them but rather only harms ourselves.

Thus if we take the initiative to clear our own minds of these negative states, (in contrast to harbouring ill will and negative states of mind), if we actually work towards increasing a genuine sense of love and compassion towards others, this brings a sense of joy and a happy state of mind within ourselves. We can begin to see the transformation taking place within ourselves, where others, regardless of who they may be, start to appear as friends. Everyone starts to appear to be quite appealing, and when you go round you can feel a sense of connection with others, and you know that this would be a wonderful state to be in.

In contrast to that if one harbours ill wills and negative states of mind, then others will actually appear as enemies. In particular, even those who are close to us, who we normally consider as being close and dear

ones can start to appear as enemies, and that is a very dangerous place to be because this is where unfortunate incidents occur. Unfortunately, even in these times even within partnerships when there's ill will and negativity then there's cases when the husband might kill the wife, or the wife kills the husband or even the children. It is apparent that the cause of all this is ill will and hostility in our minds, is a negative state of mind and this results in these drastic situations. We need to understand that this all occurs because of a negative state of mind, harbouring the negative state of mind and not working towards really securing a strong basis of love and compassion in our hearts.

Therefore, we need to understand that the real value I'm trying to relate to you is for you to really reflect upon this and carry it in your hearts, as the very essence of your life. If you're a student of spiritual practice and meditation this is the essence. Regardless of that, if you want to be a good person, want to have well-being in your life then this is really the essence of what you need to try to keep in mind, to see the value of love and compassion and to make every attempt to secure and protect that within oneself.

What I've been saying so far really relates to the significance of the meditation practice because, while meditation is one word, it actually summarises the techniques and methods for securing and enhancing these positive qualities within ourselves. The meditation practice further involves ways and means of overcoming our negative states of mind. For example, when anger arises within us it is clear that we feel uncomfortable and our minds are agitated. We don't feel peaceful, restful and calm when we are angry, do we? So if there's a means and a way to overcome anger then why not apply that?

Even the simple meditation practice of focusing our mind on a virtuous object or a particular object, during that time we are training our mind to temporarily forget about the object of our anger. Forgetting about the object of anger is when anger reduces in our mind, to that extent

even when we get a temporary relief from the sentiments of anger within ourselves we feel much calmer and peaceful. So it is to this extent that we can see the relevance and significance of the meditation practice.

The great Master Atisha has succinctly presented this piece of advice that really summarises all of these points when he says that, 'the best personal instruction is to constantly check one's mind'. In effect what he's saying here is particularly what I've been relating to you earlier, to really investigate and check our state of mind and to distinguish between what are the states of mind that cause us turmoil, and what are the states of mind that cause us to be peaceful and calm. This personal investigation we do becomes the most crucial element of scrutinising and acknowledging what kind of thoughts or attitudes are harmful to our well-being such as anger, jealousy and so forth. These are what we call the negative states of mind and are what cause destruction and turmoil, whereas when we harbour the positive qualities of genuine love and compassion, concern for others and further developing the opposite of negative states of mind such as non hatred, non anger, non jealousy and so forth, then these are the main contributors for our well-being and other's well-being too. Then taking initiative to enhance these states of mind is really the method, the consequence of checking our state of mind.

In the formal meditation practice what is advised as the most crucial element for keeping our focus on a positive object is twofold. The states of mind are specifically mindfulness and what is called introspection. In the meditation where we develop single pointed concentration it is mindfulness which keeps a constant remembrance of the chosen object. Whereas introspection is the state of mind which keeps a vigilance over our mind to check whether we are becoming distracted or not, whether the mind is going off from the object or not and then when it is bringing it back to the object.

While this is practised during a formal meditation, applying these two tools of mindfulness and introspection is even more essential in our

everyday lives when we are not engaged in a formal meditation practice. So in our everyday lives what we are being mindful of is our state of mind, what kind of thoughts and what kind of attitudes we are harbouring. The function of mindfulness is to always remember to maintain a virtuous frame of mind. Whereas the function of introspection is checking how we are conducting ourselves physically, verbally and mentally, what kind of thoughts we are harbouring, what kind of speech are we saying, what kind of actions we are doing physically? Introspection fulfils the function of maintaining a vigilance that we are protecting ourselves from engaging in negativities. So this is how it helps us in our daily life.

I have attempted to present the value and the importance of love and compassion in this evening's presentation. To again further emphasise some of the values of love and compassion, when we express genuine love and compassion towards the other that becomes a strong foundation for developing genuine trust amongst each other. Then further with love and compassion it enables us to really acknowledge the kindness of others and thus we will naturally appreciate others.

The value of love and compassion is something which even animals appreciate. It's very clearly seen that animals which are cared for by their owners or by anyone who cares with love and compassion is definitely appreciated. For example, we can see how pets which are owned by kind owners, because of the love and compassion that they receive, the pets show such great appreciation to the owners, so much affection because they recognise the kindness that has been shown to them. You can see even fierce animals that are normally considered as being dangerous animals, even with such animals there are accounts of those who have been cared for and nurtured when they were young by humans. Later they really return that kindness, even after many years of no contact, and can still appreciate and remember the kindness of those carers and ensure affection in return. There are many accounts we can see of this being true.

These should be examples for us to acknowledge that if even animals can appreciate love and compassion and return this with affection, then we as humans who are much more intelligent and are able to distinguish between what is right and wrong should be even more able to appreciate the love and kindness that is shown towards us. Of course there might be some cases where the humans may not really do that, as the great Master Lama Tsongkhapa has mentioned, anyone who returns harm for kindness shown towards them would be someone whose values are even worse than animals. Even animals are able to appreciate the kindness that is shown to them, as humans we should be much more appreciative acknowledging we understand on a greater level. The main point is that when love and compassion are expressed towards us, we can see the value of this and appreciate it. Likewise, when we take the initiative to develop love and compassion, to further enhance and develop it and express it towards others it will be definitely appreciated.

Another point I regularly mention is that when individuals are engaged in a committed relationship, initially what brought you together would be most likely attachment, that's how it starts. However, what I emphasise is that while attachment might have been the initial factor for you to come together, what you can do now is to really increase that sense of love and compassion towards each other. So as mentioned earlier the value of love and compassion in the relationship is that it brings about a genuine sense of caring for each other, that brings about a genuine sense of mutual trust and an initiative to care for the other's well-being. Taking care of each other, looking after each other in a positive way.

We have come to the end of our time. I would have thought about conducting meditation but the main point is that I have presented already the real purpose for the meditation practice, so that is something of value. Of course meditation practice, once you have learned the technique, is something you can do by yourself at home at any time. I'd like to thank you all for paying such great attention this evening.



Venerable Geshe Doga with group after the Teaching, Warrnambool, 2016

Refuge

Day 2, 2016



Refuge Prayer

I go for Refuge until I am enlightened
To the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Highest Assembly.
From the virtuous merit that I collect,
By practising giving and other perfections,
May I attain the state of a Buddha
To be able to benefit all sentient beings.

Please sit in a comfortable and relaxed posture. The recitation of the Refuge Prayer and generating the enlightened mind right at the beginning and also just before the teaching, is to remind us of the motivation that we need to generate for the teachings. The significance of taking refuge in The Three Jewels in the Buddhist tradition, is said to be protecting oneself from taking a wrong path or going in a direction that causes harm. Taking refuge of course is not unique to just the Buddhist tradition, as every major religion would have a form of refuge, and while the object of refuge may differ, the act of going for refuge is the same.

The significance of generating the altruistic mind, which is also called the awakened or enlightened mind, and is known as bodhicitta

in Sanskrit, is a means to protect ourselves from going into a lesser path to achieve a lesser goal.

Thus we can now begin to expand on the significance of taking refuge. Since taking refuge means protecting ourselves from going on a wrong path it implies that if we take refuge it will secure us on the correct path. The correct path would be one where by engaging in the path, it leads us to become a better person in general, but more specifically helps our minds to become more and more subdued and peaceful, particularly in relation to subduing the mind from the delusions or afflictions that arise. Taking refuge and following the path helps to lessen the delusions in our mind, and our mind becomes more and more clear and pure. When this occurs then taking refuge has definitely served its ultimate purpose. This shows us that we need to adopt the sound wisdom of ensuring that we are following a correct path which is beneficial to ourselves.

When we follow the presentation in the Buddhist teachings we find that it is a very logical presentation, which helps us gain wisdom and understanding. With all aspects of the Buddhist teachings, when we study and practise in a systematic step by step way, we can see that the very presentation of the teachings and the practices are based on logic. When something is presented in a logical way, and then the next sequence or step is also presented in a logical way, it helps overcome certain questions or doubts we may naturally have.

So it is in this way that you may have found out that engaging in the Buddhist teachings gives real insight, reasoning and logic. This is something really unique. More specifically the Buddhist teachings are based on an approach of knowing the recipient's mind. Those who are receiving particular instruction receive advice that is based on their mindset, rather than advice which may not be relevant for their individual mind. What needs to be understood here is that the Buddha, being omniscient, gave different levels of teachings appropriate to the capacity and mental disposition of the listener. Again this is something that is very

unique within the Buddhist teachings. So for those of us who may help others in the teachings, even though we may not have an omniscient mind yet, it is very important that we keep in mind that we present the teachings in accordance to the level of understanding that can be manageable to the listener, and not just present things randomly, which may not be relevant, or may be beyond their capacity. This is very important.

Furthermore, a very unique feature of the Buddha's teaching is that he did not present it as a dogmatic system, where whether you agree with it or not you have to accept it. This is not the approach at all, but rather the presentation of his teachings is where he allows the listener to question. This allows the listener's mind to become more receptive for wisdom to increase further, and to become more intelligent. The famous quote from the Buddha himself that he gave after a teaching is, 'Do not accept my words merely out of respect or faith in me, but rather check it yourself with reasoning and logic. If you find it suitable then you can accept these words'. These words are very profound and unique in the Buddha's presentation.

There are those who may not yet consider themselves Buddhists who say, 'Well I'm not really a Buddhist yet, but from what I have read and understood so far, I've found that the Buddhist approach is very reasonable, logical and also it is not dogmatic in any way, giving me the freedom to question, to learn and to understand at my own pace'. These days that is what people even in the Western developed world seem to really appreciate and acknowledge as unique.

An example of one of the Buddha's teachings you may be familiar with is a text called the Vajra Cutter Sutra. In this Sutra the very presentation is based on questions that one of the Buddha's chief disciples asks the Buddha, and the Buddha gives a reply, and then another question is posed to the Buddha, and then he replies to that. So the whole teaching is really presented as a dialogue. We can see from this one example how meticulously the Buddha presented the teachings.

The second aspect of the prayer we recited earlier following the refuge, is the mind that aspires to achieve enlightenment. It is a state of mind that through various methods is generated within oneself. When it is actually generated it is called 'the awakening mind' or 'mind of enlightenment'. It is the mind that aspires to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all living beings. Therefore, it is the utmost altruistic state of mind taking into account the welfare of all living beings, by considering how they are deprived of happiness and are experiencing great suffering, and then taking the personal responsibility of placing all beings into happiness and leading them out of all suffering. One makes the commitment to lead all living beings to the ultimate state of enlightenment. Once someone has generated the mind of enlightenment, known as 'bodhicitta' in Sanskrit, they are called a 'bodhisattva' or a 'noble being' and the deeds that they engage in are The Six Perfections. Engaging in these practices of The Six Perfections are means and methods to completely and solely benefit other beings.

The significance of taking refuge and generating the mind of enlightenment is such an incredibly profound practice. While securing us from going onto the wrong path it also secures that whatever practices and good deeds we do are for the purpose of benefiting other sentient beings. It is not merely for our own personal gain or selfish motives, but rather the practices we do are entirely dedicated for the welfare of other sentient beings. That is what the mind of generating enlightenment secures. When whatever practice we do is preceded with refuge and bodhicitta it becomes incredibly profound. Of course if we had time I would have liked to go into a more detailed explanation of the actual meaning of each word of the verse, however that is perhaps something you could do some research into.

We should also take note here, lest we start to wonder, if I dedicate all my virtuous deeds and everything that I do for the welfare of others, then what about one's own welfare? Don't I miss out myself? This may be a natural doubt that arises in our mind. So we need to take specific note

here as explained and emphasised in the teachings, that when we solely dedicate our deeds and virtues for the benefit of others, our own needs are automatically and naturally fulfilled.

This is a unique point that Lama Tsongkhapa, one of the great Tibetan masters of our tradition, has emphasised, and this is really something to keep in mind because otherwise we might start to doubt and think I wonder if the practice is relevant for me! This is a very essential point not to be disregarded. We need to keep in mind that when we benefit others wholeheartedly, our own purpose is fulfilled naturally on the side. We can take this advice into consideration not only on a spiritual path, but in fact even in our mundane relations that we have with others.

It is clear, for example, that for someone in a family situation thinking only about their own selfish interests does not contribute to the welfare of the family as a whole, and in fact is not even fulfilling their own purpose. Whereas when someone prominent in the family, such as a parent, really thinks about the family's welfare and considers the interest and well-being of the family and provides for the family, their own needs are naturally met as well. Having this expansive scope of benefiting others on a larger scale means not only fulfilling one's own needs, but really contributing to the welfare of others. This is something which is really profound and logical as well, and therefore is something we need to keep in mind.

Again I will briefly cover the meaning of these words that we recite. Where the refuge prayer says, '*I go for refuge until I am enlightened to the Buddha, Dharma and the Highest Assembly*' that part is quite clear. It is presenting the objects of refuge and the action that one takes, which is going for refuge in The Three Jewels. This is identifying the objects of refuge which are threefold and are also known as The Three Jewels. These are the Buddha, the Dharma which is the teachings in general, and then the Highest Assembly or the Sangha.

While all religions have an object of refuge Buddhism differs in that we have three objects of refuge. Going for refuge is the action that one is taking and the duration of the refuge is until one becomes a Buddha. This is the refuge of the Mahayana or the Great Vehicle, in which enlightenment is the ultimate state one is seeking to achieve. There is also the common refuge from both the Mahayana tradition as well as the Theravadan tradition where one takes refuge, for example, as part of taking lay precepts and the indication here is, I go for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha until the end of this life.

The Buddha is the supreme enlightened being and the Dharma refers to the ultimate Dharma, which is True Paths that lead to True Cessation. These two aspects True paths and True Cessation is the actual or ultimate Dharma. The Assembly refers to those who have actualised True Paths and obtained True Cessation. The indication here of, *'I go for refuge'* is in relation to the individual being who is going for refuge. When we say, *'I go for refuge'* it is also implied that one is seeking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha by having understood that two causes are necessary for going for refuge, and then seeing the objects of refuge as being suitable objects. This is what we call the nature of the objects of refuge and their suitability.

The next line reads, *'May I attain the state of Buddhā'* and again the I is referring to the individual being who is aspiring to generate that mind of enlightenment. The following line of, *'Through the collections I create by practising giving and other perfections'* indicates the deeds which one engages in, having generated the mind of enlightenment. The collections are the virtuous merit gained through the good positive deeds of generosity, meditation and so forth. These are what we call 'the root of virtue' which we can accumulate from that. The final line is *'To be able to benefit all sentient beings'* and this indicates that the sole purpose here is for the benefit of other sentient beings.

While this is a very brief explanation of this verse, the reason why I go through the explanation is because it is a verse that we recite regularly before any practice we do as a Buddhist. This four-line prayer is to be understood as a very profound practice that encompasses the entire path to enlightenment. Therefore, as a regular practice, when we recite this verse it is helpful to spend a few minutes thinking about the qualities of the refuge objects and what going for refuge actually entails. Then we can also spend a few minutes contemplating the meaning of the aspiration to generate the mind of obtaining enlightenment. That is the summary of the very profound and incredible practice of going for refuge and generating the mind of enlightenment.

Knowing that most of you have been practising Buddhism to the best of your ability for a long time now, I am very glad from my side to accept your request to bestow the Refuge Ceremony with the understanding that it benefits your minds. It is noteworthy here to mention that it is based on the request that you have made, and because of the fact that you have been interested in practising Buddhism for a number of years that I've agreed to and accepted this request.

Normally I never take the initiative from my own side to give refuge or to suggest you take refuge, and this is of course in line with the tradition of how Buddhism is presented in general. Also more specifically, I don't see it as befitting to try to give refuge to others before they fully understand what it entails and what it means to be Buddhist, as it may seem to be wanting to gather more numbers to be Buddhists. That is definitely not an appropriate practice, which I personally received advice on from the Dalai Lama prior to coming to the West. He mentioned regularly when I first came to the West that I should not be going there to try to convert others to be Buddhist, or getting more people to be interested in Buddhism, but rather just to share whatever I have understood and learnt in the Buddhist teachings with a good heart, so it can benefit others. The advice was that regardless of whether people are interested in Buddhism or not, just share openly and warm-heartedly what would

be of benefit to others. So my intention thus far has been that when I share the Buddhist teachings I share them with an intention that it may benefit others, and I always say that you do not need to become a Buddhist to apply this in your life. You may get benefit from following the advice and instructions regardless of your faith, and so even when someone makes a request to me saying I'd like to take refuge, if I feel that they are new to Buddhism I will usually say, 'Wait a little bit, there is no rush.' I don't know if other teachers have the same approach but this is my personal approach.

In any case, your request to take refuge is based on a genuine intention of really wanting to follow and engage in the Buddhist practices with a sense of commitment, which is of course very good and remarkable. In fact, anyone who feels committed to follow a religious tradition and abide by the moral precepts of that tradition is really incredible and very remarkable.

Again His Holiness the Dalai Lama constantly praises the different religious faiths for offering very genuine means and ways for people to become better human beings. He constantly reminds people of different faiths how incredibly important it is to come together, to have mutual understanding, sharing and having interfaith dialogues, as this is something that will lead to religious harmony. Indeed, the Dalai Lama's sincere attempts to bring about religious harmony and interfaith dialogue are something which is really appreciated by many other religious figures, and I have personally received comments from Christian priests and Jewish rabbis. For example, a Jewish rabbi once told me, 'Oh you are very lucky', and explaining further he said, 'you're fortunate because you have an incredible, remarkable spiritual leader in the Dalai Lama'. He said, 'I haven't seen any other spiritual leader who goes to the same extent of promoting and encouraging religious harmony and interfaith dialogue'. The sincere words of the Dalai Lama really touched and impressed the rabbi, and that is why he was telling me how very fortunate I was to have the Dalai Lama as my spiritual leader.

A Christian priest also mentioned similar sentiments saying, 'I am really appreciative of your work here as a Buddhist preacher', and he said he could arrange for me to give talks, and if it would be uncomfortable for me to talk in a church he would arrange a different kind of hall, but of course for me it doesn't matter and I wouldn't mind giving a talk anywhere.

This practice that the Dalai Lama is suggesting is something which is really profound. On a personal level it is good that when we adopt a particular religious faith, we feel inclined to follow the spiritual tradition and to understand that it is the most suitable path for us. It is then important not to have a critical mind about others following different traditions or religions, because each tradition has its own unique way and presentation of helping the followers of those traditions, and knowing that it is benefiting them we have respect for that. So while we may have faith in our own tradition we can respect all other traditions. Very prominent leaders of other faiths acknowledge the Dalai Lama's great works and his great vision. It is believed by many and accepted as fact by many that this approach would really contribute to world peace, because when there is religious harmony within the world it will definitely contribute to much more understanding and less hostility, and thus bring genuine peace for the world. So this is really very incredible and profound advice that the Dalai Lama is giving to everyone.

It is relevant and appropriate to explain a bit about what actual refuge entails prior to bestowing the Refuge Ceremony. In going for refuge we need to first identify the objects that we are seeking refuge in and these, as briefly mentioned earlier, are The Three Jewels. What is presented next in the topic of refuge are the Causes for going for Refuge which encompass the reasons for going for refuge. Having identified the objects of refuge and the causes or reasons for going for refuge the next topic is How to go for Refuge. As mentioned earlier we can see that this is a very systematic approach where having identified the objects of refuge, and seeing the reasons for going for refuge, we look at the

manner of going for refuge. Once we have taken refuge we look at what the stages are for the training or the precepts we need to take.

Having explained the commitments or precepts which basically encompass the training, the last topic is the benefits of taking refuge. We might naturally ask, if I am embarking on this training and taking these precepts, what is the benefit? The teaching itself presents the benefits of taking refuge. We can see that this is a very systematic and logical approach giving us the opportunity to have our questions and doubts answered in accordance with questions that arise in our mind, so giving us a way to expand our mind with reasoning and logic.

Identifying the objects of refuge briefly again as the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. The significance of going for refuge in the Buddha is that the Buddha is presented as the supreme guide who actually guides us on the path that we wish to embark on. The second refuge, which is the Dharma, is presented as the actual refuge because it is the Dharma that encompasses the methods and means of how to engage in the practices of following the path that leads us to the ultimate goal. It is by actualising the Dharma oneself that we become liberated. That is why the Dharma is presented as the actual refuge. Thirdly the Sangha or the spiritual community is presented as the assistants or the helpers on the path of practising the Dharma.

A very good analogy which is presented as a way to understand how the objects of refuge help us, is that of a very sick patient whose goal is to be cured from an illness. A sick patient who wishes to be cured needs to rely on a skilled doctor, represented by the Buddha, who is able to unmistakably prescribe the right treatment and medication, which is like the Dharma. And if the person is very sick they may not be able to take all the medication on time and follow all of the treatments without assistance, so they may need help and that comes in the form of the Sangha, which is like the nurses who assist us.

To get some understanding of what a Buddha is, a Buddha means an enlightened being who actually encompasses the quality of a supreme being who has eradicated all faults and negativities, and all possible positive qualities have been obtained. This is a being who has completely perfected all positive qualities and eradicated all faults, and thus is a being who has a mind which is omniscient, an 'all knowing mind'. The inner qualities within the Buddha are what we call the ultimate Dharma. The Dharma is the qualities of the Buddha's mind. It is in this way that we can understand and define what is called the enlightened noble being, the Buddha Arya being.

The ultimate Dharma Jewel encompasses the two aspects, as mentioned earlier, of the cessation and the path which lead to the cessation. The actual Sangha jewel is, again, a noble being who has obtained a certain level of cessation and a certain level on the path. What we really need to derive from the significance of going for refuge is that it is the Dharma that is the actual refuge, and that this is where we need to derive the real essence of our understanding. Once we understand that the Dharma is the actual refuge, this indicates that ultimately we are the ones that need to liberate ourselves, because we are the ones who have to actualise the Dharma.

The Dharma is something which is to be actualised within our own mental continuum, and that is what protects us from all miseries and sufferings, leading us to the ultimate cessation. This is a significant and really important point to bear in mind, because as noble and as holy as the Buddha may be, he is still a separate individual from us who we may not have direct access to, and it is not the case that the Buddha can miraculously take us out of our misery and suffering. While the Buddha shows us the ultimate way and guides us, it is up to ourselves. Also while the Sangha are referred to as noble beings, they can only assist us to actualise the path and cannot implant the path within us. Thus the path is to be actualised or practised by oneself.

We have identified the objects of refuge as the Supreme Being the Buddha, the Dharma which is True Paths and True Cessation, and the Sangha who are the noble beings who assist us. We can now move on to the topic of what are the causes of going for refuge in these three objects. One cause is said to be the fear generated from understanding the plight of the sufferings of cyclic existence in general, and specifically the sufferings of the unfortunate lower realms of existence. When we contemplate the possibility of experiencing these sufferings over and over again, it does bring up a sense of anxiety and fear of not wanting to experience these sufferings.

If there was no way to be protected and be free from the great sufferings experienced in lower realms of existence, then it would be quite pointless to have the unnecessary angst and anxiety of contemplating more sufferings. The fear generated by contemplating these sufferings leads us to firstly develop a strong wish to be free from suffering, and then to seek a means where that is possible, and finally to see that taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha is the supreme method to help us to be free from these sufferings. The fear of these lower realms and cyclic existence in general is initially the main cause for us to go for refuge.

This presentation can also be taken on the level of our daily mundane life, where we often lament that we have problems. On a personal level if we have problems, there is no use in constantly dwelling on them and keeping on saying, 'I've got problems, I've got problems', while not taking any initiative to actually overcome these problems. To constantly lament that we have problems while not looking into ways to overcome them is rather foolish, and pointless. If we have problems, the initiative we should take is to not be weighed down by the problems as if we were carrying a big burden and being completely crushed under it. If the problem is on a mental level, then we should not allow ourselves to be completely overwhelmed and burdened, but rather generate a courageous mind of looking into ways and means of overcoming this problem. If there is a solution, then we shouldn't feel despondent or overwhelmed. But if

it is a certain kind of problem that cannot be immediately solved, then worrying and lamenting about it would not help the situation either, therefore it is better to willingly accept it. So we can see how we can learn from this advice.

In very simple terms, none of us like to have any problems and so we want to get rid of the problems we have now and avoid problems in the future. The best method is to look into the ways to overcome the problems we may be experiencing at present, and how to avoid problems that may occur in the future. This would be a wise and reasonable approach. This is, in simple terms, giving an example of how we relate the fears as the cause for taking refuge.

One relevant point that was missed out earlier in the presentation, is that once we have identified the objects of refuge, what actually follows is investigating and looking into whether the objects of refuge are suitable to be objects of refuge or not.

With our limited time we cannot go into much detail, but as a means to present these relevant topics for understanding the suitability of the objects, particularly in relation to the Buddha, we ask ourselves, how can we trust the Buddha as a supreme guide? It is because of the following four conditions or factors. Firstly, the Buddha is completely free from all fears himself, particularly in relation to all the different sufferings that are to be experienced. Next is that the Buddha is skilled in freeing others from all fears, and the third factor is that the Buddha extends help to others with unbiased love and compassion for all. The fourth condition is that the Buddha helps others regardless of whether they have benefited the Buddha or not. These four qualities of the Buddha succinctly present the suitability of the Buddha as a supreme guide, and thus a suitable object of refuge. If the Buddha was not free from all fears himself, then there would be no possibility that he could help others to be free from fears. That is the first important condition.

Then secondly even if someone were to be free from all fears themselves, if they didn't have the skill to help others then they would be lacking the necessary quality to be a supreme guide. The analogy given here is of a mother who has a natural, unconditional love for her child. If this mother has no arms and she sees her precious child being swept away by a strong current in a river, she would have so much unconditional love that she would want to jump in and try to save the child, but without arms she would have no possibility of saving the child from being swept away. The mother is not lacking love and compassion for the child, but she lacks the ability to save the child. Similarly, therefore this is given as an analogy to show that with unconditional and unbiased love, skilled means is also extremely important to be able to benefit others.

Unbiased compassion is incredibly important because it encompasses all beings. The Buddha has the unsullied intention to benefit as well as the complete skilful means. Having the means and the skill is an extremely important quality; even on the common level of our everyday lives we need to be aware that if we were to advise others, we need to be skilled in whatever we are giving advice on. If we lack full understanding and knowledge, then it would not be suitable advice to give others. We need to keep this in mind as well.

I feel that the real relevance here, that I like to emphasise, is the point about the Dharma Jewel being the actual refuge. The Dharma being the ultimate refuge can be understood first of all with the presentation in the Buddhist teachings where it says that the ultimate protector for yourself is within your own state of mind. How does one understand the relevance of this to one's own level, when the ultimate Dharma Jewel has been presented earlier as the path and cessation within Arya beings? One might wonder, how does the Dharma Jewel help me at this point if it is something which is within someone else's mental continuum, and is not yet developed within my own mind stream? How does the Dharma Jewel actually help me at my level now? This is a significant doubt. Again more specifically, once one has generated a genuine fear of

being born in the lower realms, one may wonder, how can the Dharma help me if the actual Dharma Jewel is not in my mental continuum right now, but rather in the mental continuum of the Arya beings? This is a significant question.

We need to understand that while the ultimate Dharma Jewel, being the cessation and the path, may not yet be actualised within our mind-stream, but is within the Arya being's mind-stream, what is within our mind-stream now can help protect us from unfortunate rebirths. Thus the Dharma Jewel that we can obtain now at our level, which will be our protector, would be the morality of intentionally avoiding the Ten Non-Virtuous deeds. We are practising morality when we consciously decide to avoid the non-virtuous deeds and adopt the Ten Virtues, such as abstaining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct and so forth. This decision to intentionally avoid the act of killing and thus practise the virtue of the opposite of saving lives, and rather than stealing practising generosity, is the practice of morality. This practice of ethics within our own mental continuum of avoiding the Ten Non-Virtues, and adopting the Ten Virtues is what we have access to within our own mind-stream.

It is this morality within our mind-stream that acts as the Dharma Jewel to protect us from unfortunate rebirths. It is presented in the teachings that when we avoid the Ten Non-Virtues, and practise the Ten Virtues, it will definitely protect us from taking an unfortunate rebirth in our next lifetime. What we have now such as an abundance of wealth and long life comes from the cause of virtuous deeds we have engaged in of being generous and saving lives in the past. This understanding is really crucial as a way to understand how the Dharma Jewel is the actual refuge at our level. When we have consciously decided to abstain from the Ten Non-Virtues and engage in the Ten Virtues, then that is the actual Dharma Jewel within our own mind stream, that will help protect us from an unfortunate birth. Of course one could elaborate on these very significant points further but with limited time we will conclude here in explaining the Causes for going for Refuge, and move

on to the next point which is the Manner of going for Refuge. This is presented with four subdivisions which are; firstly, Going for Refuge by Knowing the Good Qualities, secondly, Going for Refuge by Knowing the Distinctions, thirdly, Going for Refuge through Commitment, and lastly, Going for Refuge by Refusing to Acknowledge other Refuges.

The first division refers to knowing the excellent qualities of The Three Jewels of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. There can be very extensive explanations of the qualities of the Buddha combining the qualities of the Buddha's body, speech and mind. The qualities of the Buddha's body refer to the major and minor marks of an enlightened being which the Buddha possesses. Then there are the qualities of speech, but most importantly there are the qualities of the mind. As mentioned earlier the Buddha's mind is one that has acquired all the perfected qualities and has abandoned all faults. The Buddha's mind is free from all fears, has skill in teaching others to be free from fears, has unbiased compassion, and helps others regardless of whether the Buddha has benefited or not.

The Dharma is identified as true cessation and true paths leading to cessation. The excellent qualities of the Dharma show the unmistakable path that leads to the ultimate cessation. It is by actualising the Dharma within the mind-stream that the Buddha became the supreme being. In fact, the enlightened being, the supreme guide, the Buddha, is actually the result of the Dharma. Therefore, when we think in this way of cause and effect we can see that since the Dharma is the cause for anyone to become a Buddha, we understand how the Dharma has great and incredible qualities.

The Sangha are those who embody true paths and true cessation in their mind-stream. Thus the noble beings who embody the Dharma Jewel are the actual Sangha Jewel.

The second subdivision of Knowing the Distinctions is further subdivided into six. While we do not have time to go over them we

can list them beginning with the Distinction based on their Defining Characteristics, secondly, the Distinction based on their Enlightened Activities, thirdly, the Distinction based on Faith or Devotion to them, fourthly, the Distinction based on Practice, fifthly the Distinction based on Recollection, and finally, the sixth is the Distinction based on how they Increase Merit.

The third subdivision is Going for Refuge through Commitment, which basically means the understanding of what the three objects of refuge represent or signify. This commitment means upholding the Buddha as the teacher or the supreme guide of the refuge, the Dharma, which is the path to cessation, as the actual refuge, and the Sangha or the spiritual community as those who assist us to attain that refuge.

Now we can go through the Precepts of the Refuge. With the Precepts of the Refuge there are what we call the General Precepts and the Specific Precepts of the Three Jewels. The general precepts are subdivided into six vows which are –

1. By recalling the distinctions of the good qualities of The Three Jewels going for refuge over and over again.
2. By recalling the great kindness of The Three Jewels striving to worship them constantly
3. Establishing other living beings in the practice of considering them with compassion.
4. In whatever activity engaged in for whatever purpose, making offerings and supplications to The Three Jewels, forsaking any other worldly methods.
5. By recalling the benefits of going for refuge doing so three times in a day and three times at night.
6. We should never abandon our refuge in the Three Jewels even though our life may be threatened.

The specific precepts are twofold which are the Three Abandonments and the Three Affirmations. The Three Abandonments are the things we have to avoid once we have taken refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Firstly, once we have taken refuge in the Buddha Jewel we should abandon taking ultimate refuge in worldly gods or spirits, secondly, once we have taken refuge in the Dharma Jewel we should abandon harming others, and thirdly once we have taken refuge in the Sangha jewel we should try to avoid falling under the influence of irreligious or negative friends.

The three affirmations are the things we have to adopt when we take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Firstly, having taken refuge in the Buddha we should regard all figures and images of enlightened beings, regardless of what substance they are made of, as the actual Buddha, and pay them equal respect. Secondly after taking refuge in the Dharma we should treat every individual letter of the Dharma, such as texts and books, as the actual Dharma and respect them as the Buddha's words. Thirdly, after taking refuge in the Sangha jewel we should regard all those who wear robes and who represent the Sangha as the actual Sangha jewel.

The advantages and benefits that arise from taking refuge are eightfold and these are –

1. We shall have become a Buddhist or an inner being.
2. We have established the foundation upon which we can accept the vows such as the lay vows, ordination vows, bodhisattva vows and tantric vows.
3. Much of the evil committed in the past can be purified.
4. Vast amounts of merit can be collected daily.
5. We shall be held back from falling into the three lower realms.
6. We shall be free from the harm directed at us by humans and non-human beings.

7. Our wishes will be fulfilled in the very way that we set our mind upon them.
8. The full enlightenment of Buddhahood will be quickly attained.

With the remaining time we will now conduct the Refuge Ceremony itself. For those taking refuge the intention we generate is that, I seek refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha until I achieve enlightenment. We bring a specific intention to our mind which can relate to becoming enlightened in a physical aspect like all Buddhas are said to be enlightened, for example as occurred in this world when the Buddha Shakyamuni attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree in Bodhgaya. We take refuge until that state of physical enlightenment is achieved, but more importantly the main thing is to relate to that enlightened state of mind, or the dharmakaya, which is also called the 'truth body' of the Buddha. Therefore, the intention we generate in our mind is that we go for refuge until achieving the ultimate state of enlightenment.

The intention is to take the refuge in the mind of the great vehicle tradition, however while the words themselves come from that tradition, the common tradition of taking refuge is relayed here. Therefore, while I recite the words in Tibetan you can repeat them in English after the translator.

For the purpose of taking refuge we envision Buddha Shakyamuni above us. Traditionally we begin with three prostrations which can be physical prostrations or can be signified by putting our palms together at our heart, and imagining that we are making three prostrations to the Buddha Shakyamuni, surrounded by all other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and to the Refuge Master.

The refuge ceremony commences (not transcribed)

Here it would be relevant to mention the personal advice by Lama Tsongkhapa in the Lam Rim teachings on refuge. He says the Buddha

is the one who teaches refuge, and the community assists you in accomplishing refuge, but the real refuge is the jewel of the teaching, because once you have attained it you are liberated from fear. The ultimate teaching jewel is defined as being the special fulfilment of the gradual increase in both the beginning of the practitioner's elimination of the mere portion of faults, and his or her knowledge that brings about a mere portion of good qualities. What is being pointed out here is that the actual process of practising the Dharma, in regards to the Dharma being the ultimate refuge, is the gradual increase in the practitioner eliminating small faults and beginning to acquire small positive qualities.

If we do not actually engage in the practice of applying ourselves to the avoidance of negativities and the acquiring of virtues, and thus abiding by karma, then there is no possibility of being liberated from the lower realms. While if we do apply ourselves in this way, by observing the law of karma, we will definitely be liberated. To summarise this point, it is explained that the actual refuge is the Dharma Jewel, and how that is defined at our level is the gradual increase of the good qualities and the decrease of faults. It is also mentioned here that this does not happen naturally, but rather we have to actually put effort in, and this effort is the practice of the Dharma. This now concludes the teaching and actual Refuge Ceremony for this session.

I appreciate you inviting me and others here and I thank you for your efforts in having this assembly. If I had more time I would elaborate in thanking you all for inviting me and it would be appropriate to do so. Also I encourage you to continue to try to put into practice, to whatever extent you can in your daily lives, what I have explained this weekend. Practise love and compassion when you see others are deprived of happiness for whatever reason, and if possible bring a little joy and happiness by saying nice words or doing something practical. When you see others experiencing any kind of suffering, help to alleviate that in any way you can.

Start with your own immediate relatives, friends and others whom you come across in whatever circumstance, and try to remember that it is your responsibility to help others who are deprived of happiness and who are experiencing sufferings. Helping them to be free from that suffering, on whatever level, is putting love and compassion into practice. I encourage your group to meet regularly, and to continuously and harmoniously help and support each other's practice in Dharma. That is good.

For those of you who have taken refuge and feel that, I am a Buddhist now, it is quite a significant gesture because in the world now, when anyone hears about someone being a Buddhist what immediately comes to mind is someone who is committed to practising non-violence. This is a very good contribution to the world and to be recognised in that way is really quite significant. People seem to trust Buddhists and on a personal note, I have amongst those who look after me one carer who assists me regularly, who is not a Buddhist himself. He mentioned that he was having a new shed built in his backyard by a worker from Thailand who was Buddhist, and he appreciated that this worker was very honest and respectful and worked very diligently.

Having taken refuge in the Dharma Jewel one of our main commitments is to avoid harming others. The essential core practice is committing to not be violent towards others. After becoming a Buddhist, we try to maintain this commitment to intentionally refrain from harming others. In fact, the Buddha has placed great importance on this point to the extent that the Buddha has said, 'if you consider yourself a follower of me then if you hurt others it is equivalent of hurting me, and when you help other beings it is equivalent of helping me'. The Buddha also said, 'if you admire me, and want to take refuge in me, and see me as your guide, then the practice that you need to follow is to completely avoid hurting others, and as best as possible to help and benefit others'.

Again I thank you all for making these arrangements and this weekend possible. After yesterday's session there were quite a few people who

made comments that they enjoyed the teaching and that it really helped them. Perhaps today also people may have felt some benefit and if so it was significant, and the efforts were not in vain. I regularly say that if we can have even one hour in our life where we are having a truly relaxed good time, in the sense of being happy and content and having no afflictions in our mind, it has served its purpose and to have the conditions where we naturally feel that way is really significant.

I personally conduct myself in this way that I feel I am really joyful. I've got the basic necessities to sustain myself, I've got no worries, no agendas, no problems and due to the kindness of the Buddha I am wearing these robes, which means I've committed myself to keep some of the higher vows of the Buddha's teachings. To whatever degree I might be able to practise it is due to the kindness of the Buddha that I've been given this opportunity to practise in this way and my needs are taken care of. I am really happy and I have no reason to worry, and so that is how I conduct myself in my normal life.



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