

THE END OF SUFFERING

(GODWIN'S TALKS AT THE CHI LIN NUNNERY IN HONG KONG IN 1999)

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PREFACE

It is very pleasing that in the year of Godwin's 10th death anniversary we are able to publish this new set of his retreat talks given in Hong Kong in 1999, the year before his untimely passing.

Godwin valued highly the opportunities that were offered him to teach year by year in Hong Kong, and elsewhere in the world, where he could renew his friendships with meditators, and see them grow through his teaching and the commitment they brought to their practice. When Godwin travelled abroad he was always quick to pick up the particular concerns and cultural issues of his retreatants, therefore he addresses in these talks not only personal themes such as working with our thoughts and emotions, but also the pertinent issues of stress, competition and consumerism in the wider society. Thus his teachings have become a valuable resource for so many people in facing the challenges of their everyday lives.

We are most grateful to Edmond Lam and Yuk Ching for all their work in transcribing the tapes of Godwin's talks, to Jack Chan for forwarding the transcripts to us for Godwin's website, and to all Godwin's spiritual friends in Hong Kong for their work in conserving and publishing Godwin's teachings over the last 10 years. We are happy that friendly links have been maintained and strengthened with the Nilambe Buddhist Meditation Centre in Sri Lanka, where Godwin was resident teacher for 20 years, through their individual and group visits, and more recently their hosting Godwin's successor, Upul Gamage, to lead further meditation retreats in Hong Kong.

We trust that this offering of Godwin's teaching to a wider audience will be an inspiration to many in their spiritual practice and effort to free themselves from suffering.

Jeanne Mynett

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DAY 1: INTRODUCTION TO MEDITATION

(Tuesday, October 5th 1999)

GODWIN: Firstly, I would like to extend a warm welcome to everyone. I am very happy to be back here once again. I always enjoy a visit here with you all. I was happy to hear that people are becoming more and more interested in meditation. So first of all I'll be giving an introduction to meditation, as was requested. After that we will have a discussion, or a question and answer session. We will then take a short break, and afterwards we can meditate for a while, and end with some Pali and Chinese chanting.

IMPORTANCE OF AWARENESS

A question that we can reflect on is, why do we meditate? What is the purpose of meditation? So I'd like to say the idea of meditation is to free ourselves from the suffering that we create ourselves. The Buddha often said: I teach one thing – suffering and the way out of suffering. So meditation can be seen as the medicine for our sickness. Today, we will be discussing some aspects of this medicine, how we can use this medicine and how we can heal ourselves.

One very important aspect of meditation is learning to be aware, learning to be mindful, learning to be conscious. Otherwise we are becoming more and more like machines. Machines can function very well, but a machine doesn't know how it is functioning, why it is functioning. Awareness is the complete opposite of that: just knowing, just being conscious, being aware of what is happening.

So I will mention some advantages, some benefits of the practice of awareness. For example, what is happening right now? You may be physically present here but mentally you may be quite elsewhere. So where are you? With the help of awareness, come back here, to be present, to be conscious of what is happening right here and now. This is one very important aspect of meditation, learning to experience the present moment and also learning to be aware of and to work with the past and the future.

Another important aspect of awareness is learning to use awareness to explore, to investigate what is happening in our mind and body from moment to moment. In this way, in any experience we have, in any situation we have to face in life, we can make an effort to learn from it, to make our own discoveries. This is very, very important. And if we can learn to do this, we can meditate in any situation. It can be a pleasant experience, it can be an unpleasant experience; we can even learn, find out about the unpleasant experiences we have.

Related to that is another aspect of awareness, learning to work with our emotions, particularly our unpleasant emotions. Everyone here has problems with these unpleasant emotions. It can be anger, it can be fear, anxiety, or stress; we are all having to deal with these emotions. So one way of working with these unpleasant emotions is learning to be conscious, just learning to be aware of these emotions, whatever these emotions are. When we are experiencing anger, for example, can we be conscious of the anger, can we be aware: now I am experiencing anger? So rather than suppressing that anger, rather than pushing away that anger, rather than denying that anger, not giving in to that anger, we are just knowing that anger, and then we learn to work with it within ourselves.

So the important thing is not the person, not the situation that is creating the anger but rather to deal with your anger, with what is happening inside yourself. If you can learn to use awareness in this way, then meditation becomes a real healing, an art of healing. Then we realize that meditation is not something we do only when we are sitting. In this way, we can learn to meditate at any time in our daily life, our conscious, everyday life.

TECHNIQUES

Now there are two meditation techniques which are connected with awareness. One is being aware of our breathing itself; and the other is using general awareness while the body is breathing: we can be aware of our thoughts coming and going, and come back to our breath as an anchor. In this way we can learn to have some mastery of our thoughts, otherwise they can control us. And we can do the same with our emotions.

As I said earlier, we can use the breath and awareness to experience the present moment, the here and the now. It's interesting to reflect that most of the time in our daily life, we are either with something which has happened in the past or we are thinking about something which is going to happen in the future. And this happens mechanically, without our knowledge. So if for even a few seconds, a few minutes, we can be in the present with the help of the breath, those moments are moments of freedom.

I often like to speak of using our breath as a friend. And the breath is a very good friend because every time we are with the breath, it reminds us of the present moment. And breath is the only friend who is with us all the time; even when we are sleeping, the breath is there. So until the last moment, the friend is always with us, and our last breath we spend with our friend. So in this way, if we can make a connection with our friend, the friend will always help us. Another aspect of this technique is that once we have developed awareness with the help of our friend, then we can continue to have that awareness in our everyday life.

Another meditation which is related to the use of awareness is to meditate without an object; earlier I described the meditation technique using an object. So in this technique you allow any thought to arise, any emotion to arise, even the emotions that you don't like. You allow any sensation to arise from your body and just know what is happening from moment to moment in relation to your mind and body. It is simply allowing our minds to do anything they like and just knowing, just being conscious, just being aware of what is happening in our minds and bodies. It is like a very friendly mother allowing her child to do what it wants and she just watches, just knowing what the child is doing. In the same way, we watch and know what is happening in our mind and body.

LOVING-KINDNESS

So now I'd like to describe a very important meditation which is called meditation of loving-kindness. It is learning to be friendly to ourselves and learning to be friendly to others. The phrase I like to use is that meditation of loving-kindness helps us to be our best friend. Sometimes without our knowledge we are our own enemy; we do things which create suffering for ourselves and suffering for others. We are not even conscious of what we are doing to ourselves. So with meditation of loving-kindness, you learn to make a connection with yourself; you learn to feel really friendly, gentle, kind and tender towards yourself. And if we can learn to relate to ourselves in this way, then we can learn to relate to others in the same way. It is learning to open our hearts to ourselves and open our hearts to others.

Another important aspect of loving-kindness is to develop the quality of forgiveness. Sometimes we can be carrying wounds in relation to what we have done to others and what others have done to us. And we can be holding onto these wounds, so that as a result we really suffer from a lot of guilt in relation to what we have done to others, and then hatred and ill-will in relation to what others have done to us. So it is very important to learn to heal these wounds by learning to forgive ourselves and learning to forgive others us.

Another important aspect of meditation of loving-kindness is to sometimes think of the kindness that we have received from other people. Everyone here has received some kindness from other people. But do we ever reflect on these things; do we ever think of the good things, the kind things others have done for us? Doing this can give us a lot of happiness, a lot of joy that we have been receiving kindness from other people in many different ways.

So another aspect of loving-kindness is learning to feel grateful for these things. Here again, there are so many reasons for us to feel grateful for the things that are happening to us, the

1: Introduction to Meditation

blessings that we receive in this life, but we don't think about them; we think only of the negative things and create suffering for ourselves and others. Shouldn't we feel grateful that we can hear? Do we ever think about that? Do we ever feel grateful that we can see? Do we ever feel grateful that we are interested in these teachings, in spiritual life? That's why all of you have come this evening. So it's a very important quality for us to feel grateful for all these small things, little things that we are receiving in life.

So now I'd like to just go over some of the points that I made. I touched on four meditation techniques which can help us to experience some peace, some loving-kindness, some joy, and eventually to free ourselves from the suffering that we create. It's a different way of living from what we are normally used to.

The first point I made was the importance of awareness which is a very vital aspect of meditation: learning to live consciously and not to live unconsciously. And I mentioned some benefits of living in this way, living consciously. Then I mentioned how we can practice focusing on our breathing, where it helps us to develop more and more awareness. I described how this meditation on our breath can also have advantages, benefits in our life. Then I mentioned the meditation which does not have an object but rather involves having a general awareness of whatever is happening in our mind and body. So it's important for us to learn to use awareness to focus on an object and also it's important to learn to have this general awareness which I described. And lastly I mentioned the importance of meditation of loving-kindness in our life.

So this is a short introduction to meditation. And these are some aspects of the medicine that the Buddha discovered for the illnesses which create suffering for us. So when we can really use this medicine, then we can live in a very healthy way, in a peaceful way, in a happy way, with a lot of loving-kindness to ourselves and a lot of loving-kindness to others.

So thank you very much for listening with such attention and with such awareness. And if you have any questions about what I have been saying, about the medicine, you can now ask any questions.

DISCUSSION

RETREATANT: Is there any difference between the meditation that you have just talked about and the traditional Chinese way of qigong?

GODWIN: I must say that I don't know very much about qigong. But the little I know is that it is using your physical movements and using your energy in relation to the physical movements. So I'd like to say that it's a way of developing your awareness in relation to what is happening in your body. And also one can see that it's developing loving-kindness in relation to the body, so using your energy in a useful way. So I would say that you can use qigong along with meditation as they can really complement each other. Thank you for asking that question.

RETREATANT: I want to ask: you said that we must be aware of what is happening from moment to moment in our everyday life, but I find sometimes my attention is not there. I want to be aware, but when I am busy working I cannot focus on what's happening at the moment.

GODWIN: I am happy you have at least made an effort to practice awareness in daily life. So in everyday life, when we lead a very busy life, one thing we can do is not to learn to focus but rather to have a general awareness in relation to the thoughts that we are having. So don't try to be aware of all your thoughts during the day, that won't be possible; but during the day, as often as you can, just come back to your mind and see, now what are the thoughts that I am having?

The second suggestion is in relation to emotions: just find out during the day, as often as possible, what are the emotions I am having? Am I anxious, do I have stress, do I have fear? Just to know, especially the emotions you are having in relation to your thoughts.

And the third suggestion is to be conscious, to be aware when no unpleasant emotions are there. During the day there are times when we are free of these unpleasant emotions but unless we have awareness we don't even know that our mind is free. And the last suggestion is, during the day keep trying to come back to the present, just to be really present with what you are doing; not every action you do but at least some actions. This will enable you to develop this quality of being in the present. So in this way we can use awareness to enhance our way of daily living.

RETREATANT: First of all I would like to thank you for sharing your experience with us, I am very grateful. My question is: there are at least four types of meditation, I am very confused and I do not know which is best for me. The first type of meditation is the type you have just introduced; and the second type of meditation is the traditional Chinese way, Zen meditation; then the third way is transcendental meditation, TM; and then a fourth way is yoga. So I am confused between these four types of meditation and I would like to know how I should choose which is best for me.

GODWIN: My first suggestion is that when you are not doing sitting meditation, try to use awareness as much as possible, as I mentioned in response to the question that was raised earlier. And the second suggestion is that when you can do sitting meditation, using the breath can be a very useful meditation, as they do in the Zen tradition. The third meditation I described is not transcendental meditation; in TM you use a mantra. So what I described was not having an object. Now in TM there is an object, but this, in contrast, is just general awareness of what is happening. And the third suggestion is that when you get angry, when you get annoyed, when you experience fear, when you have hatred, just learn to be friendly towards it any time you experience that.

Without taking the medicine, you don't know how the medicine works. So try to use the medicine that I have been presenting and then maybe after some time you can tell me your experience with the medicine. Maybe if you can come for tomorrow's talk then you can tell me what happened during the day using some of these medicines that I presented. Thank you.

RETREATANT: During my daily life I have tried to train the awareness and consciousness and I find this medicine very useful. It helps me to calm my mind down and I find it very peaceful and I can also handle various situations with this calm mind. So I appreciate this technique. However, one problem that I encounter during my work is that when I train myself this way, I find that my reactions are slower than before. My work requires me to think a lot and requires me to react very quickly, so when I find my reaction is slower than before and my thinking process is slower than before, I do not know whether I have used the wrong technique or whether there is any problem in my training.

GODWIN: I am very happy that you have experienced some benefits of using awareness in daily life. It really shows that the medicine can work. But what is important is that when you have awareness, when you want to think quickly, when you have to act quickly, you should be able to do that. Sometimes in the retreats that I give, I ask the meditators to walk fast. And sometimes they tell me that when they walk fast, it's easier to develop awareness. And with

more awareness and with more meditation, your mind becomes very clear, so with a mind that is very clear, you can really act quickly when you want to.

In Sri Lanka I have a friend who is a lawyer who is practising meditation in a very serious way, and because of his meditation he has been doing very well as a lawyer. It has helped him to think quickly and act quickly, so that even other lawyers realize the change in him and they are also asking how to meditate. So please realize and remember, meditation is not only slowing down, but when you want to, you can act quickly and you can think quickly and you can respond quickly. When I walk in the streets of Hong Kong, I have to walk very fast!

I'm sorry that we have to stop this question and answer session now. If you still have a question, maybe after the session is over you can come and see me. So now I'd like to suggest that you take a break for about five minutes and please during this break try to be silent, because the silence helps you to be conscious, to be aware. And then you can come back and we will meditate for a while. So we'll ring the bell and you'll come back. I'd like to repeat, please be silent during this time and please make an effort to be conscious and to be aware. Thank you.

(Break)

GUIDED MEDITATION

It was very peaceful. It was nice that some of you were sitting and others were moving very quietly, peacefully, with awareness, in silence, as I suggested.

The meditation we are trying to do is something very simple. Try to combine awareness with friendliness. So firstly, feel friendly and gentle towards yourself and whatever is happening in your mind and body: thoughts, sensations, emotions, just know them with friendliness and softness. Please realize that this is not concentration. But with friendliness, just know from moment to moment what is happening in your mind and body.

So please sit in a comfortable position so that you don't have to move or make a noise while you are sitting. If you are having thoughts, just know what thoughts you are having in a friendly way. Any emotions that you don't like, just be aware of those emotions with softness and friendliness.

Can you feel the peace and the stillness in this room?

Feel friendly and gentle towards your mind and body.

Now please open your eyes with awareness and when you change your posture and whatever else you do, please do it consciously and with awareness. And thank you very much for sitting very peacefully and completely still.

CHANTING

And now we can do some Pali chanting and I hope everyone will join in; they are very simple chants. So the first chant is chanting the three refuges. And while chanting, let us try to be in the present with the chanting. So I will lead the chanting and please join in with me:

Buddham saranam gacchami
Dhammam saranam gacchami
Sangham saranam gacchami

The second chant is *Sadhu* which is chanted in traditional Buddhist countries. It means 'well said'. As it is just one word, I'd like everyone to join in, please:

Sadhu

The last chant is *Shanti* which means peace, so we will try to experience that peace while we make that chant. As it is just also one word, please try to join in:

Shanti

Now let there be some Chinese chanting, please.

Thank you very much for coming this evening and for asking some very useful, practical questions. And thank you very much for the nice chanting.

So until we meet tomorrow I hope you will continue to practice in the way that I suggested. The subjects that have been given to me for the next talks are some of the questions that I frequently hear meditators raise in relation to their practice, so I hope you will come and benefit from the discussions and the talks that we will be presenting. And may you sleep peacefully and wake up peacefully. Thank you very much.

DAY 2: IS MEDITATION DEVELOPING CONCENTRATION?

(Wednesday, October 6th 1999)

GODWIN: There is this idea among meditators which is quite common, that meditation is only developing concentration. In fact, in Sri Lanka when meditators come to the Centre, I ask them what they are trying to achieve in meditation and the invariable answer is that they want to develop concentration. I know that even here some meditators have this idea that meditation is only developing concentration. Certainly concentration has a place in meditation, but there is another important aspect of meditation which is equally or more important. That is what is called *vipassana* or developing insight.

With this emphasis only on concentration, I know that some meditators have even given up meditation, and when you ask for the reason they say that they are unable to concentrate. And I know that many meditators are struggling with this idea of developing concentration. So in this way meditation can become a battle and sometimes can create even more suffering, when the idea of meditation is to experience joy and freedom.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONCENTRATION

And then the word concentration may not be the right word, because the word concentration has many meanings, many connotations. I don't know what it means in Chinese, but in English, when you use the word concentration it implies exclusion. Another problem for meditators is trying very hard to maintain and sustain that concentration. This can create a lot of tension and restlessness in one's practice. The Pali word *samadhi* which is translated as concentration gives an entirely different meaning. For *samadhi* to be there, the mind and the body have to be completely relaxed. And by trying too hard one can never experience *samadhi* because in trying too hard and having strong expectations, one can create further problems. It's interesting that according to the Buddhist texts, before one experiences *samadhi* one has to feel gentle, friendly, and also have an element of joy and bliss in one's practice.

One of the Buddhist texts speaks about eleven benefits of meditation of loving-kindness. One benefit of meditation of loving-kindness is that the mind naturally becomes calm. So in practical terms this means that when you are meditating, if you can learn to be friendly to what is happening, then with that friendliness the mind will become calm and stable naturally.

One of the big problems that meditators have in their meditation with the breath is the idea that they shouldn't be having thoughts, so that when thoughts come they think they are a

distraction, a disturbance. So there is a battle in their mind. And the same with physical pain: it becomes a battle. And they try very hard to achieve a calm and stable mind. But if with friendliness the mind becomes calm and stable naturally, then it is easier to sustain that calm mind.

It is interesting that in the Noble Eightfold Path which the Buddha presented as a way of experiencing freedom from suffering, mindfulness comes before *samadhi*. So it shows very clearly that what is important is learning to be mindful, learning to be aware, just knowing what is happening from moment to moment. From that the *samadhi* can come naturally. So in practical terms, when we are trying to learn to be aware of our breath, what we can try to do is to be aware of whatever is happening in our mind and body. Even if you realize that your mind is not concentrated, that your mind is not calm, just knowing it, just accepting it can make such a difference.

I live in a lay meditation centre in Sri Lanka and there the emphasis is on how to integrate meditation with daily life as lay people. When Buddhist monks come there to meditate, I sometimes encourage them to go deeper in concentration because they have opportunities, sometimes living in forests or in secluded places, where they can really go deeper in concentration, they can go deeper into *samadhi*. But when I meet lay people like you, I don't emphasize so much going into deep concentration or *samadhi*.

So what I discovered with the lay people who were coming to the Centre was that sometimes they would have deep concentration while they were there because it is a very calm and peaceful place which is conducive to the developing of concentration. But what happens when they leave the Centre and go to the main town that is close by is that their concentration is lost, their calm is lost. So because of this, now what I try to do is to emphasize the importance of awareness and also learning to work with distractions and how to handle emotions when they arise in any situation. So when they are in the Centre I encourage them to work with, make friends with, explore unpleasant emotions that create suffering in everyday life. If they can learn to do that while they are in the Centre, when they leave the Centre they can continue to work with these emotions when they arise in any situation in life.

CONCENTRATION AND INSIGHT

Now I'd like to say something about the connection between *samadhi* and *vipassana*, insight. One practical thing which you can do is that when the mind is reasonably calm and stable, then you can investigate, explore any situation in life. So in everyday life when suffering arises – when conflicts arise, when unpleasant emotions arise – you can learn about it, you

can explore it, you can investigate it and see how it is created by yourself. And then you can discover tools, how to work with these emotions, how to learn to be free of them.

So the idea is that when you have these pleasant, calm states of mind, not to hold onto them, not to identify yourself with them, but rather to use them in developing insight. I came across a very interesting quotation in one of the Buddhist texts where it says that sometimes calm can come first and insight later, sometimes insight can come first and then calm comes later; that's a very interesting point. They can also sometimes come together. So sometimes this strong distinction we draw between calm and insight doesn't seem to apply because they are really interconnected, interrelated.

What does it mean that when there is insight, calm can come? One way of understanding this in relation to developing insight is that you can allow any thought to arise, any emotion to arise, any sensations to arise; and whatever arises, you just observe, you just watch, you just know. So from that practice sometimes calm can come naturally without your wanting to have calm and tranquility. And sometimes if calm is not there and you are unable to really develop insight in that way, then you can focus your attention on the breath and try to develop some calm and clarity and again start investigating and developing insight.

And in relation to insight, according to the Buddha's teachings there are three characteristics, three important aspects which we have to develop if we are cultivating insight. The first is to develop the understanding, to realize, how things are impermanent, how things are changing from moment to moment. So while we are sitting now, your thoughts are changing from moment to moment; there is one thought, then another thought arises. So there is this continuous change taking place in relation to your thoughts. Sensations in your body are also changing from moment to moment. Your state of mind too is changing from moment to moment; sometimes you may feel happy, sometimes you might feel restless, sometimes you may feel calm. So whatever your state of mind, that is also changing.

It is a very important step to be open to the changes that you are experiencing internally, and then whatever changes take place in your mind and body, if you learn not to resist them and if you learn to be open to them and realize what is happening, there can be any changes taking place but there will be no suffering.

In the same way, externally, the world out there, the life out there is also always changing from moment to moment; sometimes good things happen to us, sometimes bad things happen to us, sometimes unexpected things happen to us. But here again, whatever is happening externally, if you can realize the fact of change, of impermanence, and be open to

it, any changes can take place but you can still be free because you recognize that we have no control. Now I am told that very soon a typhoon will come here. Can you prevent that typhoon from coming to Hong Kong? But what we can do is to understand it, to be open to it and as it is said in the Buddha's teachings, to see it just as it is. This is the teaching: I know it sounds very simple!

Another very important insight which we can develop is in relation to our suffering and what causes our suffering. So here again, when we experience suffering, when we experience conflict, when we experience disappointment, when we experience frustration, if you can accept it as a fact you may then realize that the suffering comes in relation to resisting something, not wanting that to happen, wanting something different to happen.

And the last insight, which is very subtle, which is very difficult to grasp, is this insight into no-self, the experiencing of emptiness. In simple terms, when we have an emotion like anger, we have the idea that it is my anger, so you identify yourself with the anger and that's where the anger is creating a problem. When we experience physical pain, again we have this identification, this is my pain. So it is really the idea that things belong to you that brings about this identification and this problem.

So it is through these three insights that we can really free ourselves of our suffering. In doing this, concentration, calm, plays a role but what is more important, as I explained to you earlier, is the developing of wisdom, the developing of insight; developing this wisdom of learning to see things just as they are.

Now if you have any questions, please raise them and I'd like to suggest that you ask questions in relation to what we have been discussing today.

DISCUSSION

RETREATANT: Master Godwin, thank you very much for your practical talks. First of all, would you please answer for me the following questions. Can you explain the difference between awareness and mindfulness; and secondly, is it correct that when our awareness exists, at the same moment, mindfulness occurs? Is that true? Would you please give your ideas? Thank you.

GODWIN: So the Pali word for mindfulness and awareness is *sati*. The word *sati* is translated in many ways; sometimes they use the word awareness, sometimes they use the word mindfulness, sometimes they use the word attention, sometimes they use the words being

alert, being awake. Whatever the translation, the original word is *sati* and there are many translations of that. The meaning is the same though.

RETREATANT: I have got two questions. I think I shall ask them one by one. The first question is, while I meditate, even when my mind is settled down, when I do not suppress the passing thoughts and when there is no pain, it seems that nothing special happens. So where do I place my mind at that moment in order to observe impermanence? What is the object of meditation at that time?

GODWIN: So I would suggest sometimes just be with that experience which you described and then naturally some insights can come; so this is one suggestion. The second suggestion is sometimes to ask the question, who is experiencing this calm, who is experiencing this thought-free moment? When you ask that question, you will realize that there is no 'who' apart from whatever is happening. And the third suggestion is that when you come out of your meditation, that state of mind changes, which demonstrates impermanence.

RETREATANT: And the second question is that when I meditate, when my mind is stable, I begin to try to dig out my old wounds from the past and train myself not to react to the wounds, in order to heal the wounds in my mind. And then in daily life I find that when I face the same situation again, I do not have any reaction, which means that the wound is healed. But in daily life I might face even more serious events than before and when I face this sort of situation, I become agitated again. That means the wound is not one hundred percent healed. So I would like to know how I can make sure the wound is completely healed, not only partly healed.

GODWIN: I'm very happy that you are using your meditation in a very skillful and meaningful way. Actually, when the mind is calm, it is something very useful to try to use that calm mind to heal the wounds that we are carrying by learning to forgive ourselves, learning to forgive others and learning to let go of the past. But the thing is, don't come to the conclusion that the wound is healed. So sometimes, as you rightly said, in everyday life something unexpected happens and then the old wound can arise in a different way. When that happens, please don't be surprised, please don't be disappointed but realize that you have learned something very useful, that the wound is not completely healed, that you are still reacting; and please see it as a learning experience rather than as a failure.

We cannot prevent emotions from arising, we cannot prevent memories in relation to the wounds from arising, but what is important is that you know how to handle them, that you have discovered the tools. Anything can happen: what's important is to use the tools at that

time without coming to the conclusion that the wounds will not arise again. Then you will come to the state where whether the wounds arise or whether the wounds do not arise, whether emotions come or whether emotions don't come, it makes no difference, and that is a breakthrough. I am very happy the way you are practising.

RETREATANT: I would like to ask whether we can practice meditation in other postures than sitting. For example, can we practice meditation while standing or lying down? And also, do we have to practice meditation inside a house, under a roof? Can we practice meditation outside, like in a park?

GODWIN: Yes, one can meditate in four postures: sitting, standing, walking, lying down. And you don't have to always meditate under a roof; sometimes it is very nice to meditate out in nature. We should learn to meditate anywhere because anywhere we are, the mind is working. So there is no special time, there is no special place.

RETREATANT: I would like to ask about no-self which you have just mentioned. Although you suggested we could ask ourselves this question, who is feeling the calmness, or who is feeling the pain, when I ask myself this question, the direct answer is that I am feeling the calmness and I am feeling pain. So it is rather difficult for me to grasp what you said about no-self. Do you have any other suggestions?

GODWIN: This is the most difficult and profound aspect of the Buddha's teachings. So I'll try to answer your question in a different way. With the sense of self or with this practice of identifying ourselves with things, we feel that we are somebody, especially somebody very important. So all our suffering, all our emotions are related to this idea of being somebody. This somebody wants things his way or her way and when things do not go according to his or her way, that is when suffering comes.

So the no-self idea is being nobody. This idea of 'somebody' can always create suffering because, as I said, he or she wants things his way or her way. But when this idea of being nobody really takes hold, then there are no expectations. Whatever happens there is no problem and that is freedom.

Another way of understanding the Buddha's teaching of no-self is to try to understand this concept of ownership. Because of this idea of self, we think, we assume that we own certain things. So I assume that this cup is my cup. And because it is my cup, when it is broken or when it is stolen, I suffer. So do you see how this idea of ownership, this idea of mine creates suffering? And then we have the same thing in relation to our body. This is my body. And

when this my body becomes sick or when this my body becomes old and you have white hair like mine, you suffer as a result of this.

Then we have the same idea in relation to other people: this is my wife, this is my husband, this is my child. So whoever you think belongs to you, you relate to them differently from the people whom you think you don't own; you relate to them in a different way. When my mother dies, I suffer but when another person's mother dies, no problem.

So you see the practical aspect of the Buddha's teachings. This was really the Buddha's approach; as he often said, I teach suffering and the way out of suffering. So this is a very powerful tool, a powerful way of freeing yourselves of suffering. And what causes our suffering is this idea of ownership and this idea that things belong to us. An interesting point to reflect on is what things we think we own. What happens when we die? Do we really take them with us? So this is why I said this is the deepest and the most profound aspect of the Buddha's teachings.

RETREATANT: Master, when you talk about the noble eightfold path, I can understand the meaning of each step of the noble path; we start from right thought and then right speech, right effort, etc, until right concentration. But then I still don't understand how we can gain wisdom from right concentration. It seems to me that there is a gap between right concentration and wisdom, so I don't understand how we can practice virtue and concentration and then have wisdom.

GODWIN: Very good question. I have found in one of the Buddhist texts a passage where they mentioned the eight steps, and it's interesting that they say that from right concentration there is right wisdom and then there is right liberation. Then there is another text, it's a very interesting text, which says that when there is right concentration, when there is right *samadhi* you learn to see things as they are. So as I said earlier, from *samadhi*, naturally you will develop wisdom and you will learn to see things just as they are.

I'd like to briefly go over that text because it's very inspiring, it's very interesting. To my mind, that quotation shows very clearly the Buddha's model of meditation. It starts by saying that when you act skillfully then there is no remorse, no guilt in relation to what you have done. When there is no remorse, then the mind becomes happy. And when the mind is happy, then you experience joy and bliss. And when you experience joy and bliss, then you experience concentration, *samadhi*. And when you experience *samadhi*, you see things just as they are. And when you learn to see things just as they are, then you develop dispassion. When you experience dispassion, you know that you are free.

And the Buddha says something very significant, that one stage follows the other in a natural way. So there develops what is called a natural unfolding where one stage leads to the next.

So I am really happy that you asked some very good, very practical, very interesting questions which shows that some of you are really making an effort to practice meditation in a very deep way. This really gives me a lot of joy, happiness and inspiration.

So now we will take a very short break and during the break we can please try to practice silence, and in the silence try to do things slowly and consciously, with awareness. And then after 5 minutes or so, please come back. Try to move slowly and with awareness.

(Break)

GUIDED MEDITATION

Please sit in a relaxed way and please don't have any expectations of what should happen or what shouldn't happen. So begin by just being aware of your body, the sensations, the movements in your body. And just feel what it is to sit in this posture, just feel what it is to sit with your body completely still.

Now please allow the body to breath naturally. When the body inhales, you know that the body is inhaling; when the body is exhaling, you know that the body is exhaling; and come back to your breath.

Feel the peace and the stillness in this room.

Just feel the in-breath and the out-breath.

Now please open your eyes and when you change your posture, please try to do it with awareness.

We will now do some Pali chanting, and chanting can also be a meditation, experiencing the present moment with the help of the chanting.

Buddham saranam gacchami

Dhamman saranam gacchami

Sangham saranam gacchami

2: IS MEDITATION DEVELOPING CONCENTRATION?

Sadhu

Shanti

So, may you have a peaceful evening and when you go to sleep, may you sleep peacefully and wake up peacefully, and I hope to see you tomorrow. Thank you.

DAY 3: OBSTACLES TO MEDITATION

(Thursday, October 7th 1999)

THE FIVE OBSTACLES

GODWIN: This is the third talk in the series, and the subjects of these talks have all been suggested to me. I have been told that these questions or these themes come up very often in meditation circles, and questions relating to these themes are often raised. As you know, the subject of this evening's talk is 'obstacles to meditation' and a very useful little booklet has been translated into Chinese in relation to this subject.

The translation of the Pali term for this is sometimes rendered as the five obstacles, five hindrances, five enemies but I feel that these translations have a rather negative connotation. What the Pali word means, at least one of its meanings, is that it obscures, it prevents clarity. So I will go through the five obscurities.

So the first one is having very strong sensual pleasures, a strong identification with pleasures; and the second one is having strong hatred; and the third one is restlessness and worry; and the fourth one is feeling drowsy, feeling sleepy; and the fifth one is having doubt.

I'd like to start the discussion with the first two obscurities. I would prefer to call them having very strong likes; and the second one is having very strong dislikes. So let us see how these two factors affect us in meditation and how they also affect us in our daily life.

What happens in our meditation is that we like and want only pleasant, positive experiences and then we start disliking, resisting what we consider as unpleasant experiences. So these two are reactions and these reactions can create suffering in meditation. Because when we want only pleasant experiences, positive experiences in our practice, then when we have unpleasant and negative experiences, we don't like them. So I feel that in our practice, in meditation, it is extremely important to relate to experiences which we consider both pleasant and unpleasant.

I feel that actually we can learn a great deal from what we consider as unpleasant experiences. So in meditation, if we can learn to relate to these unpleasant experiences in a positive way, then in everyday life we can learn to relate to unpleasant situations in whatever form they arise. Because it is natural that in our daily life, in everyday situations, unpleasant experiences will arise just as in our meditation. So in everyday life, if we can see such experiences also as objects of meditation, then we can really learn something very important,

how to handle these unpleasant situations in everyday life, especially learning to relate to unpleasant emotions. It can be fear, it can be anger, it can be sadness, it can be guilt; in whatever way they arise, I feel that it is very important for us to learn how to handle them.

And again both in meditation and everyday life, when we have pleasant experiences, when we have positive experiences, we like those experiences to continue. Here again, we have no control and if we identify ourselves with only pleasant experiences, calm experiences, when they change what happens is that we suffer in reacting to such situations.

And in our relationships in everyday life, we also relate in two different ways to these pleasant and unpleasant experiences. When we like someone we really don't see that person just as he or she is. We will be seeing mostly only the positive and pleasant aspects of that person. And if we don't like someone, then again we'll be seeing mostly the negative in that person and we will not see the positive in such a person.

There is a very interesting statement by the Buddha in this connection. Some monks told him that there were people who were criticizing his teaching. Then the Buddha said something very fascinating. He told them that when you hear someone criticizing my teaching, if you don't like that, if you resist that, you will not really hear what is being said. And when you hear someone praising my teachings, if you are very happy and elated by that, you will not be able to really hear what is being said. So it shows very clearly, both in our meditation and in our everyday life, how these strong likes and strong dislikes can distort the picture.

Now let me make some observations about two other obscurities – feeling restless, feeling agitated and also feeling sleepy, drowsy, not having energy for the practice. Now this can be related to the question of effort in relation to the practice. If you try too hard in your practice and if you have very strong expectations, then when you don't like what is happening in your meditation, this can create a lot of restlessness, a lot of agitation, a lot of tension. And if you are not trying at all, very easily you can feel sleepy and drowsy.

I have noticed over the years that sometimes in trying too hard or not trying at all there is a cultural factor. Most of the Westerners whom I meet I find are trying too hard, because in their culture you are asked to try hard, to achieve goals and realize expectations. And most of the Sri Lankans I meet, generally speaking, they don't try at all. I am curious to know in this culture, in life here whether you try very hard or whether you are not trying at all. Can I hear some thoughts about it? In your life, do you normally try very hard to achieve things, wanting to be perfect? This is the feeling I have.

[People agree]

So if you have this tendency to try too hard, and along with that is the issue of being perfect, trying to do the right thing always, when such a person takes to meditation, they want to be the perfect meditator. So naturally there is tension, naturally there is stress, naturally there is agitation, naturally there is disappointment. So here again, the Buddha has advised us to discover the middle way between trying too hard and not trying at all. And this discovery you can only make by yourself, by seeing the results: restlessness, agitation, tension or whether you are feeling sleepy and drowsy.

And the last obscenity is having doubt, having no self-confidence, seeing yourself as a failure. So this can be something extremely negative. Whatever happens is not good enough, and so on; having no trust, no confidence in yourself. And this can be also related to the idea of being perfect, because when you try to be perfect, you cannot maintain that ideal of perfection. So then when you realize that you have failed, you have doubts about yourself, you are disappointed in yourself, you feel worthless in yourself.

When you reflect on these five obscurities or five obstacles, interesting theoretical questions can arise. One question that can arise is why there is no mention of guilt. I know that in this culture guilt is a very strong emotion. So why do you think that there is no reference to guilt in this list? Any suggestions? I would suggest that guilt can arise in relation to some of these obstacles that were mentioned. Take the first one, when you have strong likes and then with these strong likes you try to act in a particular way. Then if your action does not correspond to this idea of doing things right, guilt arises. Sometimes I have met meditators who when they are unable to be with the breath most of the time, they feel guilty. I know some meditators who when they get angry, they feel guilty about the anger, or angry about the anger.

So it is very interesting in the Buddhist psychology that in this list other related emotions are inherent, implied. Take another emotion, fear. Now why is fear not mentioned among these five obstacles? Here again, it is very simple to understand. When we have strong likes, when we have strong identifications, what happens? We fear to lose them; fear comes when our sense of ownership is threatened.

So in this way these five aspects are extremely interesting. They cover most of the emotions that bother us. Take another emotion, stress, which is a very, very common one in the modern world now. How does stress arise? Again, wanting things to happen according to your idea and fearing that you might make a mistake, this can create stress.

In the text where the five obstacles are mentioned, there is a beautiful simile that is used, and the simile is that when these obstacles become less or become absent, that state is compared to a very clear, still pool of water where you can see your own face, your own image very clearly. So yesterday I touched on some aspects of *samadhi*, meditation of calm, tranquility, and *vipassana*, insight meditation. In this simile they really come together in a very interesting way. Because when you see your image very clearly, it means that the mind is very calm, like a mirror reflecting things just as they are. So meditation of insight, of wisdom is having a mind like a mirror which reflects things just as they are.

MIRROR-LIKE MIND

So I'd like to briefly mention how a mirror-like mind functions, especially in our everyday life. Something that is considered beautiful comes before the mirror, and the mirror will reflect that object just as it is. Something that is considered ugly comes before the mirror and the mirror will reflect it just as it is. So in everyday life and also in meditation, when pleasant things arise, simply to reflect the pleasant thing just as it is, not to like it, not to give it a big plus. And if a very unpleasant emotion comes, whether in meditation or in everyday life, just reflect that emotion as it is without giving it a minus, without seeing it as a failure.

Maybe another aspect of a mirror-like mind is that it does not retain anything. What happens in our own experience, what happens in our everyday life? We retain in our memory certain experiences which have affected us. Someone has made us angry, hurt us and we are really holding onto this in our memory. This is what I call a wound. And sometimes we can retain these memories throughout our lives. And I would suggest that as we are still human, it is natural that we retain certain experiences which have happened to us. So what we can do in our practice is to realize that and sometimes to bring the memories up and try to heal them so that what we are retaining, what we are holding onto is released. Otherwise such wounds can affect us in many ways.

So I am afraid I have to stop at this stage and if you have any questions about the hindrances, about what we have been discussing, any practical aspects occurring either in meditation or in everyday life, please present the questions.

DISCUSSION

RETREATANT: In our daily life we have hurt others either intentionally or unintentionally, and therefore we have guilt in our mind. During meditation we learn to forgive ourselves, forgive our mistakes. However the fact is that we have hurt that particular person, so when we meet that person during daily life, how do we face them?

GODWIN: A very good, practical question; I think most of us can relate to that question. So if your wound has not been healed, what happens is that when you see that person, some reaction, some anger can arise. It shows you very clearly that the wound has not yet been healed. So it is good to realize in the first place how that wound has been created. If it is in relation to what the other person has done, the wound is created because we have an idea, a model, an image of how the other should behave.

So what we do in relationships is we put others on pedestals and when people fall from those pedestals, then we get hurt, we get disappointed, we get angry. And guilt arises when we have put ourselves on pedestals and then when we fall from that pedestal, we feel bad, we feel guilty. So the whole practice is to understand how these wounds have been created.

Maybe another point is that when you meet such a person, it's a very interesting opportunity; perhaps one can really play with it. Can you see that person who you are angry with as if for the first time, without the image you have been holding onto since you have been angry with them? It is very interesting how we relate to people through these old images that we have about ourselves and others. So we project these images onto others and this is how certain emotions can arise. As I said, it is a very interesting exercise to see if you can see such a person as if for the first time, then you realize you relate to him in an entirely different way.

Maybe another suggestion that comes to my mind is to try to see such people as our teachers, as spiritual friends, because they have enabled us through their behaviour to realize how wounds are created, and through that realization to learn to heal them. So if you can really feel grateful to such people, then again you will be relating to them in an entirely different way. They are our real gurus.

RETREATANT: I would like to ask, some people have an obsession about hygiene. How do we face this situation?

GODWIN: I used to meet people who have this problem and I have tried to help them through some aspects of meditation. So one thing is that because of this obsession they have certain

emotions coming up. For example, if they think they are exposed to some situation where the hygienic conditions are not good, they feel anxious, they feel insecure, they feel stressed, they have tension. So one of the suggestions I give to them is to expose themselves to such situations, not to avoid such situations. And when these emotions that I mentioned come up, arise, then they can learn to relate to them differently. The phrase I often like to use is, "I don't feel okay, but it is okay not to feel okay". And then, at least with some people, I have realized that when they constantly expose themselves to such situations, they might have an experience where the exposure is there but the way it affects them becomes less. This can be a kind of breakthrough.

If they are afraid to confront such situations, another suggestion I offer them is to try consciously and deliberately to bring up memories of these situations. So you can just bring up those memories and observe your reactions and again, sometimes you might have an experience where the memories are brought up and there is no reaction. So what we do in life is we give such situations a lot of power and we become victims of that power. But by using some of these techniques, we take away the power and then the situation doesn't affect us as much.

Another important point is to develop self-confidence; if you can develop that confidence, then you can handle that situation. You may remember that the fifth obstacle is doubt, and calling that to mind can also be extremely helpful in working with such situations. They sound simple suggestions but I know that sometimes it's not so easy.

RETREATANT: How to train in these techniques?

GODWIN: So, by doing them.

RETREATANT: I practice loving-kindness in the last ten minutes of my meditation sitting. Usually I practice meditation before I go to work, and maybe there is a worry that there won't be enough time, so I find that the practice of loving-kindness is not very effective. Therefore I began to practice loving-kindness in the middle of my meditation when my mind was calm and I wouldn't leave it until the last ten minutes. The effect is a little better than before, but still the effect is very minimal. Although I keep trying to practice loving-kindness during daily life as well, still I find the effect is minimal. So I don't know whether to continue to practice loving-kindness meditation or whether I should switch to something else.

GODWIN: Anyway, I am happy to hear that you meditate in the morning before you go to work. It shows that if you have the motivation to meditate you can always find the time. So

one suggestion I'd like to offer is that when you think that the meditation of loving-kindness is not happening in the way you believe it should happen, have loving-kindness to that. Because what happens is that if you don't like it, you resist it, and then you have an element of hatred within because your loving-kindness meditation is not happening in the way you want. But if you can say, it's not perfect but it is okay, then you'll be learning to make friends with such situations and that can be helpful.

Perhaps you are having a very highly idealistic model of what should happen when you are doing loving-kindness meditation. So maybe that is causing this reaction to practising loving-kindness. One simple suggestion I'd like to offer is that when you do loving-kindness meditation, you might try to truly see yourself as your best friend. Just really feel that you are your best spiritual friend. That can be extremely helpful.

Another very useful practice of loving-kindness is sometimes to think of the kind acts that others have done for you. We normally remember the wrong things, bad things others have done, so it is something very positive, something very useful to remember, to recall all the kind things, the good things that others have done for you. And maybe one last suggestion is to really feel happy, to rejoice that every morning you are meditating; you deserve a big plus for that.

RETREATANT: When we practice mindfulness and are with every present moment, moment to moment, that is already the practice of right mindfulness; and when we have right mindfulness, this loving-kindness will arise very naturally. So is it quite unnecessary to practice loving-kindness, because if we practice right mindfulness, loving-kindness would naturally arise. So although I have no objection to the practice of loving-kindness meditation, it seems that we only need to practice right mindfulness.

GODWIN: In a way, when there is moment-to-moment awareness, ideally you will be in the present most of the time. But as I said earlier, what happens is that we hold onto our past experiences. But when with mindfulness you are in the present, all these past experiences don't have a chance to come up. So it is very important to heal these past wounds that we are carrying, which is a different practice from the practice of awareness.

In this connection, there is a very interesting quotation of the Buddha. He was addressing a group of monks. And he told them that if you can practice loving-kindness during the time it takes to snap your fingers, you are worthy of being monks. So it is very interesting that even if for a few minutes you can practice loving-kindness it is very good. This is very much emphasized by the Buddha.

Maybe another point is that we can practice moment-to-moment mindfulness but sometimes we may lack the feeling of being related to other people, or the ability to see the suffering of other people, or to feel happy when other people are happy. So to cultivate these qualities of the heart can also bring a lot of joy.

RETREATANT: I don't know why I always get angry. I'm a very impatient person. I don't understand.

GODWIN: Are you angry now? Are you angry with me? You said you're always angry. So your practice, maybe from later today and from tomorrow, should be just to be conscious of the times when you are not angry, then you'll be surprised what a good person you are. You'll be surprised there are many moments during the day when there is no anger. So please try that and you can come and tell me the results tomorrow.

It is really funny how we see only the negative in ourselves. So there are moments when these negative traits are absent but we hardly know that they are absent. And maybe one last point is that when you get angry, maybe tomorrow, don't be angry about the anger; just realize there is anger and make friends with that anger.

So again, I am very happy that you raised some very practical, useful questions relating to your practice and everyday life; I am really happy that you are making an effort to practice meditation in this way.

Now we will take a short break and during this break, please try to be in complete silence and also try to be mindful, just to be aware of what you are doing, when you walk or whatever you are doing. And also, as we have been practising loving-kindness, just see whether you can really radiate thoughts of loving-kindness to others in the room and also see yourself as your best friend. So silence, mindfulness and opening your heart to yourself and to others. And please come back after about five minutes.

(Break)

GUIDED MEDITATION

So we will meditate now. For the meditation, we will try to work with some of the obstacles that we mentioned.

So can you allow any thought to arise, any emotion to arise, any sensation to arise in the body? And whatever arises can we relate to it just as it is, without liking, without disliking as far as possible?

Maybe we can also try to be alert, awake from moment to moment so we will not feel drowsy or sleepy.

Can you have confidence and trust in yourself that you can be open to both what we consider as pleasant and unpleasant experiences? Learning to see them just as they are. Just know that you're having pleasant experiences; only don't hold on to them. If you're having any unpleasant experience, just know it clearly and don't try to get rid of it. See both situations just as they are. And be gentle to whatever is happening to your mind and body from moment to moment.

Let us try to chant with the meditative mind that we are experiencing now.

Buddham saranam gacchami
Dhammam saranam gacchami
Sangham saranam gacchami

Sadhu

Shanti

Thank you very much for coming; and thank you for creating a very peaceful, atmosphere; and thank you very much for the beautiful chanting.

So when you go to your homes, may you sleep peacefully and wake up peacefully.

DAY 4: STRESS AND MEDITATION

(Friday, October 8th 1999)

I'd like to welcome each one of you. Stress has become a very challenging emotional state in the modern world. It's interesting that it is a phenomenon related mostly to this century. In some of the historic languages, there is not even a word for stress. In the language we speak in Sri Lanka there's no word for stress. And I am told that also in Chinese there is no clear word for stress. And even the English word stress has been used much more frequently in this century. So it will be interesting to find out what has happened in the modern age for stress to become such a problem.

THE REASONS FOR STRESS

I have reflected on this question and I'd like to share these reflections with you. I think one possible reason is that the modern world has become extremely competitive. I think in ancient days there was hardly any competition; it was a very simple way of living. So with the strong competition we have now, we have always to do better than others, and this can really give rise to a lot of stress.

I think another possible reason is that in modern times, time has become a very important factor, where doing things in time and then expecting certain things to happen at a particular time has also given rise to a lot of stress. So it's interesting that time is in a way a concept that we have created ourselves, and we have become victims of this concept that we have created.

In Sri Lanka still time is not such an important factor. If you have an appointment with someone at 9:00 in the morning, the person can come at 9:50 or 10:00 and it is no problem. The same thing can be said about the times of buses and trains. Rarely do they run on time. I can never forget one day when I was in Europe travelling by train an announcement was made. I did not understand the language, but I realized that people were looking at their watches and there was a lot of anxiety and stress in relation to the announcement. So I asked them what the announcement was about. And they told me the train was going to arrive five minutes late. In Sri Lanka, it's surprising even if the train is there in the first place! So this shows very clearly how we are relating to time in a way which is really creating stress and tension for us.

I have been enquiring why people in Hong Kong work so hard, because I thought it might be related to Confucian ethics or what has been emphasized by the ancient masters. And one of the reasons given to me is that it is due to the materialism that has become a very important part of the world today. So here again, there is a kind of vicious circle. Because materialism is

such an important factor you want to make money, and then in order to earn money you have to work very hard. One thing leads to the other and again this is creating more stress.

I think another reason why there can be stress in our lives is because of the idea of doing things perfectly. We fear to make mistakes and this itself, the concern and preoccupation we have not to make any mistakes, can also create a lot of stress. And another factor perhaps related to this is, we have become very conscious of what others think of us. We have given such power to other people, and sometimes what others think of you can create your own happiness or unhappiness.

Sometimes I meet people who are always trying to please other people because, as I said, what others think of you has become extremely important, and this aspect of trying to please others can create a lot of tension and stress. So what has happened is that for different reasons which are related to the modern way of living, a lot of stress and tension has been created.

Perhaps another factor that comes to my mind is that with the advent of consumerism and materialism in the modern world, we have become extremely dependant on external things. Because of this dependency, again our happiness and our unhappiness are dependent on these external things. I like to see it as using toys. In the modern world, human beings have created a lot of toys to please themselves, to excite themselves, to get over their boredom and loneliness. So sometimes it's a case of changing one toy for another and still they cannot get any satisfaction. The reason is that they have something lacking in themselves, so that whatever happens to them, whatever they get, is not good enough, something different should happen. So most of the time, or even all the time, people are dissatisfied.

So I see meditation in a way as learning to be our own toy. So if we can learn to really enjoy our own company, if we can be really happy with ourselves, if we can be really contented with ourselves, this would be a way of becoming independent of external toys. And in this way, stress can be reduced a lot.

WORKING WITH STRESS

Now let us consider how meditation can help us to work with stress when it arises. One thing is that stress sometimes arises because of the thought, I might make a mistake: what would others think of me? So in this case what happens initially is that a thought comes and it is just a thought, but then we give reality to that thought and we become victims of the thought. You see the importance of awareness in daily life? So when such a thought comes, if you have

awareness you can catch yourself and realize it is just a thought and it is not reality. Stress is created when we give unnecessary reality to our habitual and obsessive way of thinking. This is one way of working with our stress.

Another way is that when stress is there, what actually happens within us? Is there a particular sensation that you feel which you can work into what is called stress? Or as I said, is it always related to a thought? So you can really explore this, investigate this, find out for yourself what it is that we call stress and what really happens to us when we experience stress. It's a very interesting exercise to be with the sensations, to be with whatever is happening in your mind and body, without the word stress; take away the word stress and just be with the actual experience, what is happening to you. So I'd like you to experiment with some of the tools, some of the suggestions that I am offering and find out for yourselves which ones will help you.

Another tool is trying to be aware of the breath. Because as we found out, sometimes our thoughts, sometimes the way we relate to sensations and so on, can really build up the stress that is arising. And it's interesting that mostly stress is created by thoughts about the past or especially about the future, anticipating anxiety, failure and so on. So if you can really be with the reality of breathing, because that is happening right now, then you realize that even in the few minutes you spend with the breath, there is a complete recovery from any emotion that you have been having.

Another point is, what is the opposite of feeling stressed? I would suggest it is when we can really relax with whatever is happening; if you can really learn to feel at ease with what is happening, that is the complete opposite of stress. So it shows that modern man, unless one is a meditator, has not discovered the way just to relax with oneself. So how can we learn to relax with ourselves? Here again, one way is that if you can really make a connection with your breath and as I sometimes like to say, if you see your breath as a friend, then no sooner do you become aware of the breath, just relax with the breath, then stress and tension can just drop away.

Another tool will be to watch how the stress arises and how the process, the mechanism continues. What normally happens is that we are resisting something, and this can really give rise to stress. So if you can, really be with the stress and tell yourself, as I often like to say, I feel uncomfortable with the stress or whatever I am experiencing but it is okay not to feel okay. If you can really do that then this continuity, this vicious circle, one condition giving rise to another condition, can be stopped and you are just being with whatever is happening.

Maybe one last point to explore or to discuss is that I know some meditators suffer from stress when they meditate. How does stress arise in relation to your practice? Here again, it is through your having strong expectations of what should happen or what should not happen when you're meditating.

Another cause is your wanting something different to happen from whatever is happening. So you are really resisting what is happening in meditation, especially resisting the distractions, the so-called distractions and disturbances, and sometimes we relate to them with stress. So it's interesting that how stress arises in everyday life and how stress arises in meditation, it is the same principle that is involved.

I'd like to pause at this stage and allow more time today for any questions because I feel that this is a very important subject, the subject of stress, because it is really harming, really destroying human beings in the modern world. Some doctors have even found that many illnesses are stress-related. So stress can make our body sick, it can make our mind sick and sometimes it can even make others sick as it can create suffering for other people. So if you have any practical questions relating to working with stress, please ask them now.

DISCUSSION

RETREATANT: There are two questions. The first question is that in our daily life, while working in the office, very often we are involved in handling problems and therefore emotions arise. Is there any way that we can separate the emotion that arises from the actual action that we are doing, because in the office we have to work.

GODWIN: So what you are asking is that while working in an office, how can one work without necessarily having emotions like stress and anxiety? So when we work in the office or when we work in general, what sometimes happen to us is that we think we might make mistakes, we fear to make mistakes. In a way it's a good thing, but one has to use it in a meaningful way, otherwise that can give rise to stress and tension. A suggestion I'd like to offer is that when we work in the office, when these unpleasant emotions arise we should learn not to be surprised. Why do I say this? Because we are still human, we are still not enlightened so we are bound to experience these emotions when we are working or even at other times.

Another thing which happens is that when we have an unpleasant emotion, we feel negative about ourselves; we give ourselves a big minus. I would like to suggest that rather than give ourselves a minus, we should learn to give ourselves a plus because as meditators, we are

trying to make use of such a situation; we try to find out, now what can I learn from this? And then we should also, with awareness, find out while working in the office at what times and in what situations there have been no unpleasant emotions, when there has been no stress. This is a very, very important tool. And then if you cannot use these tools at the time when an emotion arises, at least when you go back home or later on, you can reflect on what happened.

Here again, in that type of reflection don't feel guilty, don't see yourself as a failure — this is very, very important — but rather try to learn about it: now what happened, at what time did these really unpleasant emotions come up? So we are trying to learn from it, we try to see it as a learning opportunity. You can see it as a gift that we are using meditation in such situations.

And the last suggestion is that we should develop self-confidence so that if these unpleasant emotions should come we can say, I know how to handle them, I have discovered the medicine. And then when they are not there, I will try to be aware that they are not there. So this can be also a very important tool.

RETREATANT: There is a second question. That is, when we practice meditation, there are things which might come up from the subconscious level of the mind. How can I overcome problems arising from the subconscious level of the mind?

GODWIN: Very good question. When we meditate, things from the unconscious mind come up because what we have done is that we have suppressed them, pushed some things away and not looked at them. So in meditation they are bound to arise sometimes.

Another thing is that when things from the unconscious arise, sometimes they may not be very pleasant. So we have to learn not to judge them, because it is by judging them that we control them and then when we control them, they are pushed away. Instead when they arise, if you can just observe them in a very friendly, non-judgmental way, then you create some space around them. Then what happens is that they come but you are not really reacting to them, ideally. Or even if unpleasant emotions come, you just let them be; then by doing that, we take away their power.

So the last point is that when they arise, one should be meditating at that time without an object like breathing, but as we did a few times, allowing any thought to arise, allowing any emotion to arise, allowing any sensation to arise. So allowing these things to arise, we just observe them.

RETREATANT: I have some experience to share and I don't know whether it's right or wrong. My understanding is that in our lifetime we are bound to face many occasions when emotions and various kinds of unpleasant feelings would arise and we have to have the confidence to face all these adverse situations and learn from the circumstances right in front of us. So as a meditator the important thing is to learn from the circumstances confronting us rather than be afraid of these circumstances. To learn and to train ourselves is the most important thing.

I still have one puzzle: when I am unable to solve a particular problem, I am very puzzled what to do and then the negative feelings arise. What do you suggest, how might I handle this problem?

GODWIN: So what I would suggest is that when our minds are confused, when we are puzzled, when we don't have clarity, trying to solve a problem at that moment may not be easy. Another point is that whenever we have a problem, it's a very interesting exercise to try to find out what is the model, what is the expectation, what is the image that I'm having which I am resisting now. So you realize that what you call a problem is, in a way, not the problem; but rather the problem is the idea, the image you have of how things should be different.

And maybe another suggestion is that sometimes it's also good to reflect very consciously: now this is the problem I have; now in what way can I find a solution, in what way can I respond to that problem, what I call a problem? Sometimes we have problems which cannot be solved. Take a practical example: sometimes in Sri Lanka a mother would come to me with a deformed child, or a mentally retarded child, and for such conditions there is no cure. So what can she do? It is very important to know what can be changed in our lives, and what cannot be changed in our lives. If something can be changed, you can try to reflect about it clearly, and if things cannot be changed, you have to accept that. We have to have the wisdom to see the difference very clearly, what can be changed and what cannot be changed.

One last point is that in life just as we can suffer as a result of any problem, we also have a choice not to suffer in relation to our problems; so we all have that choice.

RETREATANT: It appears to me that there are two types of emotions, one type relating to our mind, the other relating to our body. And if it is related to our mind, it appears to be easier to handle, but if it is related to our body, then it appears to be more difficult to handle. Just to give an example: when we shout at our parents, we know that we should not shout at our parents; but when I am very angry, I cannot control myself and keep raising my voice. This is

like our body controlling our mind, so what would you suggest we should do in this situation?

GODWIN: In relation to the connection between the mind and the body in the case of emotions, it's a very interesting exercise when you have certain emotions to see whether you can feel the sensation related to that emotion. So you can learn just to be with the sensation in the body, just as a feeling and take away the word that you use for the emotion. We'll take a practical example: when you experience fear, sometimes you can feel a tension in the area of your stomach. So in such a situation, if you can just be with the sensation in the body without the word fear, as I said in relation to stress, then you will be relating to that emotion in an entirely different way.

But in relation to the problem you presented in regard to your mother, my suggestion is that when you have anger in relation to what your mother has been doing, what you can do is just to be with that anger or just to be with that resentment, and again be with the sensations in the body, observing, for example, how the breath is changing very rapidly when there is anger. So try to focus your attention not so much on the way you are relating to your mother but what is happening in your own mind and body at that time. Then your attention is not so much on your mother but on what is happening inside you. So if you can learn to do that in such a situation, then after some time you will realize that the anger has dropped away on its own, because you are not feeding the anger.

One last suggestion is that when you get angry with your mother or whoever it is, without saying anything just go in front of a mirror and see what is happening to your face. And that can also help you to recover from your anger because your attention is not so much on your mother but on what happens to your appearance when you get angry.

I am happy that some practical questions have been asked and hope the solutions that I offered will help you in working with the problems that you presented. And I am very happy that you are really grappling with these problems and finding a way out of them. You can be really happy that you are making a sincere effort to use the Dhamma in handling the problems you encounter. What is beautiful about the Buddha's teaching is that one can use the Dhamma in any situation, for any problem that one has to face in life.

Now we will take a short break and after that we will meditate.

(Break)

GUIDED MEDITATION

So we will now learn to meditate in a very relaxed way.

Can you feel friendly and gentle towards your mind and body, just feeling comfortable, feeling at ease with your mind and body.

Let us just learn to be friendly with that.

If there's no stress, just know that there is no stress. And if there is any stress, just know that there is stress; learn to say okay to it.

Let us do some chanting now:

Buddham saranam gacchami

Dhammam saranam gacchami

Sangham saranam gacchami

Sadhu

Just feel the peace and the stillness in this room.

Thank you very much for coming, and when you go to your homes and sleep, may you sleep peacefully and wake up peacefully.

DAY 5: MOTIVATION AND MEDITATION

(Saturday, October 9th 1999)

GODWIN: So I'd like firstly to welcome each one of you. Some people seem to think that when one becomes a meditator, one loses one's motivation for some things. Now on what basis do people come to that conclusion? It is believed that, as I said, with the practice of meditation you become indifferent to things, you become extremely passive and that the need for action becomes less and so on. So I'd like to suggest that with meditation, you lose motivation for some things and that you will develop motivation for other things.

DEVELOPING MOTIVATION

Let me firstly touch on the aspect of how meditation develops motivation for some things. As I said earlier, I think there is a belief that with this emphasis on being detached, being aloof, you lose your motivation for life. But I think with meditation you learn to find and develop an interest in life. Especially with the emphasis on the practice of awareness, you learn to live wholeheartedly. So whatever you do in life, you'll be doing that wholeheartedly, with complete and full attention on what is being done. By developing this skill, your quality of living will change.

Related to this is that with the practice of meditation you are bound to see things, to hear things, to feel things wholeheartedly, so it can really awaken your senses. With this aspect of awakening your senses, you are bound to see certain things external to you which you have failed to see before. Small things, little things which we normally take for granted, you are bound to notice them very sharply and very clearly. This can enable us to really appreciate the beauty around us. There is a section in the Buddhist texts where monks and nuns who have become enlightened describe the beauty in nature. And these descriptions are recounted in such a creative, perfect way that it really shows how you can develop this passion for the things that you hear and the things you feel and the things that you see.

And it's interesting that the same thing will happen in relation to noticing things within oneself. Certain aspects, certain areas in our personality which we might have taken for granted, which we have not noticed before, we are bound to notice them very sharply, very clearly. So you develop a motivation both for things external and for things internal.

Now what about things like eating? With meditation, would you become indifferent to what you are eating? Would you not enjoy what you are eating? In this connection, there is an interesting quotation from Ajahn Chah — I am sure some of you are familiar with his books.

So he had said that when there is good food you can really enjoy it and when there is not so good food, you can also enjoy that. So what can happen is that you learn to enjoy life, but in a different way from identifying with such things.

In the Centre where I live in Sri Lanka, in the evening when it is clear, there is a beautiful sunset and watching the sunset is part of the schedule. So you are encouraged to appreciate beauty without necessarily identifying yourself with such beautiful things. So please remember that not identifying yourself with them doesn't mean that you have lost the motivation for them.

I think another area where you can develop motivation with the practice is that you can really become sensitive to the suffering of others, and you can also develop a sensitivity to your own suffering. What normally happens with people who are not meditators is that when they experience suffering, they have no method of working with it, they just wallow in that suffering and they continue to suffer in this way. And when they see suffering in others, they don't have the space, they don't have the time even to take notice of the suffering of others. So there is a beautiful quality that you develop, where you learn to have compassion for your own suffering and also to have compassion for the suffering of others. And when that happens, in certain situations where you have to act, you will be acting very sharply, very clearly, doing what is necessary in such situations.

So I would suggest that you develop a real motivation for relieving your own suffering and the suffering of others. And you will translate that compassion into action. Please realize that with meditation one does not become inactive, one does not become passive; rather you'll be acting, but again the quality of acting will be different.

There are two interesting English words which highlight the difference: responding and reacting. So with meditation you learn to develop this quality of responding to situations, acting without reacting. Reaction is an emotional state: when you see suffering in others, you can't handle it. But here I suggest you learn to develop this beautiful quality of responding, and therefore react less. As we are still human, in certain situations we might be reacting also, but that in itself can be a learning experience – to find out, to enquire, why did I react in that situation?

Another motivation that you may develop with the practice is that you may learn to enjoy your own company. In the meditation centre where I live in Sri Lanka we have a time for what is called individual and outdoor meditation. And here the emphasis is on trying to spend some time alone with ourselves. We hardly get an opportunity to do that in our

everyday life. So what happens normally is that when we are with ourselves we easily become lonely and bored with ourselves. What does this indicate? It indicates that we have not really made a connection with ourselves. This is related to developing the quality of loving-kindness. And then what happens, which is something very beautiful, is that when you are alone with yourself you learn to enjoy your own company very much and when you are with others you can enjoy the company of others. I think this is a beautiful way of living.

LOSING MOTIVATION

Maybe now I will try to touch on a few points where with meditation you might lose the motivation for some things. One of the biggest problems modern man has is this tendency to be victims of consumerism. We are not clear what we really need and what comes from our greed, so what happens is that society can manipulate us, society can bring up situations where attachments, this tendency to own things, to possess things whether they are necessary or not, can arise. So with more and more meditation, you lose the motivation for just consuming things for the sake of consuming things. There is a beautiful word in Pali, the word is *santutthi*, a beautiful sounding word, it means that we learn to be contented. So our lives become very, very simple and we can be really contented with just simple things. As I said, the motivation for consuming things will not be there.

Another thing which will happen is that with practice you become more peaceful; the need to be violent with others, the need to have unnecessary quarrels with others, becomes less. So you might even deliberately avoid such situations because there is no motivation to confront others and unnecessarily create suffering for ourselves and suffering for others.

So I just touched on some aspects where with the practice we can develop motivation for some things and then we'll be losing motivation for other things. I'd like to pause at this stage as there may be questions and I would like to have more time for discussion.

DISCUSSION

RETREATANT: In our daily life we have to work in our office and if we do not work for the aim of earning more money then we may lose the incentive to gain promotion. And also when we try to solve some problems in the office and try to get a promotion, we have to consult other people in the relevant field and obtain the correct advice in order to solve the problems and obtain promotions, etc. If we do not do that, then we may suffer in the end. But if we continue to do that, it may be due to greed, because we have already earned what we need and we still

want more. So how can we practice while we are working in the society but still with the aim of enlightenment, like the practice of a monk?

GODWIN: A very good question and it has a direct bearing, a direct connection to the theme of the talk. So there are two points: as a practitioner, as a lay person, what is the place of money, what is the place of earning? And then can a meditator make an effort to improve his job and try to get promotions?

There is a very interesting text where the Buddha speaks all about how lay people can practice, and in relation to money he says something very interesting. One suggestion he offers is that we should try to save some money for the future. And a part of the money that you earn has to be spent for the family. But the other suggestion is extremely important: part of the salary should be used for helping others, to alleviate the suffering of others by helping them and also to develop the important quality of generosity in oneself. So, one learns to use money functionally in this way without necessarily having the urge to be greedy for money.

The second point, in relation to gaining promotions in the place where you are working, you can always try to get promotion. If you have to sit for exams in order to get promoted, you can still do that. But here again what it's important for you to be very clear about is that you can do your best, but who knows? – you might either pass the exam or fail the exam; you might get the promotion or not get the promotion. But being clear about this, you can try to obtain these things. If you get the promotion you are very happy about it and if you don't get the promotion, you are not unhappy about it because you know the nature of promotions, the nature of exams are such that you can't always be successful.

The Buddha also had said something very interesting to the monks. Monks have to give up everything and have to be contented with just four requisites – food, clothing, medicine and shelter. And the Buddha warns them to be very careful that they are not harbouring greed in relation to these four things. So this shows that what is important is the way we relate to things rather than the presence or the absence of them.

RETREATANT: I would like to ask one question about meditation which is not related to the topic tonight. It is about *samadhi* and *vipassana*. That is, when I meditate, I try to develop calmness first, that is *samadhi*. And then when calmness is developed, I usually begin to attach to the calmness and it is very difficult for me to observe the sensations or thinking or feelings at that time. So I try to lessen the calmness or the *samadhi* so that I can observe the sensations, but once I have done that I go back to all this calmness and become unable to

observe the sensations again. So I would like to know how to balance calmness and observation, how to balance *samadhi* and *vipassana* so that I can practice in the middle way.

GODWIN: In fact, I gave a talk on this particular subject, perhaps my second or third talk. So I'll try to say something very briefly. What I would suggest is that when you have achieved what you call *samadhi*, rather than try to observe sensations use that mind that is calm and clear to develop insight. So here it amounts to using reflection. Sometimes a useful question is, who is having *samadhi*? So with that exploration, with that enquiry, you might have an experience of emptiness or *anatta*, absence of self.

And you said that when you observe sensations, the mind that is calm disappears. That is a very important realization because you develop the insight that things change, even *samadhi* changes. And the third and last point is, to realize how by identifying yourself with the calm, it can result in suffering. So in this way you develop understanding of the centrality of change, you have an insight into how suffering is created, and you can have a realization of emptiness, of selflessness.

RETREATANT: Master, you mentioned before that as we practice meditation, our wish to consume will become less and less. But the problem of following this practice is that if everyone consumes less and less, then there will be less business around in this society. Then some businessmen who rely on people's consumption will earn less and they might suffer as a result. So if we practice loving-kindness, what do we do?

GODWIN: Interesting question! It's like saying that some people are building a hospital, so if all the people who are patients become well, what are they going to do with the hospital? It is something similar to that. One point is that this aspect of consumerism is so strong in modern man that some people won't even realize that they are becoming a consumer. Because they have become so dependent on it they are not even conscious of how this consumerism operates or functions in their mind.

Maybe another point is that when people who are manipulating us to encourage consumerism realize that they are no longer successful, they might stop this unnecessary, destructive manipulation. So that'll be something very positive thanks to us meditators.

Maybe the third thing what one has to be clear is, are you concerned about businessmen or are you concerned about the victims? While your urge to spend has decreased, your good heart, your good nature has increased and you will spend some of your money in donations to charity. Then there will be more money for hospitals, for education, so the economic

system will run just the same. When you don't spend your money with your left hand, your right hand will do it in another way.

RETREATANT: I have come here to listen to Master's talks for a few days and Master has emphasized our awareness in daily life. I totally agree with that but I find it quite difficult to practice during daily life. I may be able to practice while I'm waiting for a bus or while I'm travelling on the bus, but while I'm at work, I find that the pace is very fast so it's difficult for me to maintain awareness at that time. So the most I can do is to reflect on what I did afterwards, but I'm unable to maintain my awareness in the office. So is this the only method, using reflection afterwards or is there any other suggestion?

GODWIN: So, I'd like to offer some suggestions. One suggestion is that when you are working in the office, just spend a few minutes, even four or five minutes might be enough, to be with your body and with your breath. This has two advantages: one is it helps you to develop awareness and the second is that it helps you to create some space from the stress that can arise as a result of just continuing to work without such spaces.

Another suggestion is – again just a few minutes may be enough – for you to observe your state of mind: are you relaxed, are you calm, are you anxious, is there stress? – just to know what is happening in the mind during the day. A third suggestion related to meditation of loving kindness is, again just for a few minutes, to spend some time feeling friendly to yourself and also radiating thoughts of friendliness to others in the office. In the main text that the Buddha presented which describes how to develop mindfulness, it is mentioned that even when we go to the toilet we should try to be aware of what we do in the toilet. So however busy you are in the office, you go to the toilet maybe once or twice in the day and it's a very nice situation, you are completely alone with yourself and then you can do some toilet meditation! So it is very interesting how the Buddha offered us some very practical suggestions for our daily life.

And then the last suggestion is that when you go back home, just spend a few minutes reflecting on how you spent the day. Again to find out those moments when you were reacting, when you were having emotions. And also it's very important to reflect on the times when you were free of such emotions, such reactions. And then you can make a resolution: now tomorrow let me continue to do the same and maybe try to increase the times when I can practice awareness.

RETREATANT: How can we make progress faster during meditation?

GODWIN: Don't try to make progress very fast. What is more important is the practice. So from the practice progress comes naturally. There is a beautiful simile that the Buddha uses: it's like being a gardener, so you do your gardening and you really enjoy the gardening you do, and the flowers and the fruits, let them arise when the season is ready for that.

RETREATANT: Master, you have mentioned before that practising awareness and observing when the emotions arise is very important and you also mention that we should not suppress our emotions. I appreciate that, I understand that and I try to do it. But, for example during daily life when I have an argument with my family, although I try to be aware of the arising of the anger and try to calm myself down, I cannot distinguish whether I am suppressing the emotion or whether I am observing the emotion and letting it pass. So, do you have any suggestion on this point?

GODWIN: It is a very good practical question. So when you are having an argument with someone in your family, what you might try to do is: if emotions are arising just focus your attention on the emotions rather than on the person in the family with whom you are having an argument. The second suggestion is that we suppress our emotions by judging them: I should not be having this emotion. It's a very strong conditioning that we have. So we need to work with that conditioning by trying not to judge the anger, not to give it a minus, not to see it as a failure but just being with that emotion, whatever the emotion is.

The third suggestion is: you must try to learn to see the member of the family as a very good teacher, not to feel anger and hatred towards that member of the family but to feel grateful towards him or her because he or she is giving you an opportunity to work with your emotions. The last suggestion is that you should wait for such opportunities, for an argument to start, because you can use that as an object of meditation. See it as a very interesting and useful experiment. And as I said, the member of the family is providing you with an opportunity to experiment with yourself. And if you can practice in this way, then there is a lightness to your practice, then there is joy in your practice.

So now you can take a break before we start the meditation. Please try to maintain silence and learn to move slowly and with awareness; and then you can come back after about five minutes for meditation.

(Break)

GUIDED MEDITATION

In my talk I mentioned the importance of seeing yourself as your best friend. So let us now try to make that connection. So can you really see yourself as your best friend and try to feel it in every part of your body, your whole being; just feeling at ease, feeling comfortable with your mind and body, with whatever is happening.

Buddham saranam gacchami

Dhammam saranam gacchami

Sangham saranam gacchami

Sadhu

Shanti

Now we will do some Chinese chanting and I hope everyone will join in.

Thank you very much for coming and also for asking some useful questions. So I hope to see you tomorrow, and when you go to sleep, may you sleep peacefully and wake up peacefully.

DAY 6: ONE DAY MEDITATION

(Sunday, October 10th 1999)

INTRODUCTORY TALK

First, I'd like to welcome each one of you. I'd like to mention some guidelines, some suggestions about today's meditation. Everyone here should feel happy that you have decided to come here on a holiday and devote your time to meditation. It shows the interest you have for the practice. How many people will decide on a Sunday, which is a holiday, to come here and practice meditation? So every one of you deserves a very big plus.

Now I will try to give you an idea what we will be doing today. One thing is we will try to spend today as far as possible developing the practice of awareness or mindfulness. So you have got a wonderful opportunity to try to discover more things about the practice of awareness. I have noticed that people here move and walk very fast, so today please make an effort to slow down. Slow down and just feel relaxed with that slowing down. As I said on an earlier occasion, time has become a very important factor for modern man. So today you can completely forget about time. Just feel happy that you have this opportunity to be able to forget about time, and then move around, meditate in a very relaxed way.

Another thing which we will be exploring and discovering is what it is to be silent. Again, it is not something that we can easily do in everyday life, to spend many hours completely in silence. And I'd like you to discover for yourself the connection between awareness and silence. Speaking has become such a strong habit that some people find it extremely difficult when they have to be silent. So I hope today you will learn to enjoy the silence. Enjoy the space that silence creates in our mind.

Another suggestion I'd like to offer is that though you will be practising silence, you can also try to radiate thoughts of loving-kindness, thoughts of friendliness to everyone around you. We have learned to communicate with other people only through our words. Today please see whether you can also communicate with other people in silence, just feeling for others, just radiating thoughts of friendliness to everyone in this room, learning to see others as your spiritual friends.

So we will be exploring certain meditation techniques and I hope that you will find these techniques helpful and useful in discovering how your mind and body work. The idea of meditation is to find out, to discover through these techniques how we can free ourselves,

how we can experience some peace, some calm within ourselves and also, as I said, to make discoveries while developing insight in relation to ourselves.

Meditation can be seen as the medicine that the Buddha presented for the sickness of humanity. So today you'll be tasting this medicine. Sometimes, as you know, the medicine can be very, very unpleasant; medicine is not always sweet. But if you want to find a way out of the sickness, whether the medicine is pleasant or unpleasant, you have to take it. And I really hope that today in tasting the medicine that you will have a glimpse, a realization, of what it is to heal yourself with the medicine the Buddha presented.

So today as I said, even when you have your lunch you should continue to maintain that silence. In everyday life, due to different reasons we eat very fast and are not even conscious of what we are eating. Today, I hope you will see the difference when you eat with awareness, when you eat consciously. It shows that anything in life can be a meditation. So here you will have opportunities to realize this. Not only when you are doing sitting or walking meditation but in all different situations, just see how you can apply meditation in such situations.

To give a practical example, when you have to go to the toilet and when you find that someone is occupying the toilet, how do you relate to that situation? So in that situation we can learn to develop the very important quality of patience. We can either suffer as a result of it or learn to accept it as it is and to let go of any suffering. Maybe a similar situation is when we are meditating; as I said, sometimes unpleasant experiences may arise. Physical pain or mental pain may arise. When they arise, please don't see them as disturbances or distractions, but please learn to see them as very important objects of meditation.

So in conclusion, I'd like to wish for every one of you today that with this exposure to meditation you will find a new direction in your life. When there is a change in oneself, this is bound to help the people around you in the family. It'll also help the people around you in the place where you are working. So with these changes, with possibly a new direction that will emerge, may you experience more joy, more lightness in yourself, and through that may you also be able to help others around you.

GUIDED MEDITATION

So now it's time for sitting meditation. Sit in a very relaxed, comfortable position; try to have your spine erect but relaxed.

Let us begin by being conscious of the body, feeling every part of the body. So when thoughts come, gently let go of them and come back to the body.

Feel friendly and gentle towards your body. Feel what it is to sit with your body completely still and completely relaxed.

When the body is inhaling, you know that the body is inhaling; when the body is exhaling, you know that the body is exhaling, using the breath to develop awareness.

Please do not consider thoughts as a distraction, make friends with them and come back to the breath. See your breath as your friend and just be with your friend, just enjoying, discovering your friend.

When you change your posture, please do it slowly and with awareness.

You'll be doing some standing and walking meditation now. Please walk with complete awareness. When thoughts come, gently let go of them and come back to walking.

Feel the different sensations and the different movements in your body when you are walking. Please do not look around, have your eyes downcast.

Experience the present moment, the here and the now, with the help of walking; not thinking about the past, not thinking about the future, just enjoying the present moment with the help of walking.

Can you walk as if you are walking on lotus flowers, in a gentle, soft, tender way, being conscious of each step? Do you feel the sensations in your feet? Let go of your thoughts gently and come back to walking. Please have continuity of awareness.

And please now just stand there. Be conscious that you are standing. Feel the different sensations and movements in your body. Just feel what it is to stand completely still and feel the stillness around you. Can you feel the peace and the stillness in this room?

Now return to the place where you were seated, having moment-to-moment awareness. This is going to be a very short sitting. So let us do a short meditation of loving-kindness, learning to feel friendly with whatever is happening in our mind and body: thoughts, sounds, sensations, emotions, just feeling friendly and gentle towards them, learning to use general awareness with friendliness.

After a short break we'll be doing some yoga. During this break, please try to have continuity of awareness from moment to moment and please maintain strict silence during the break. Also continue to be aware of your body, and after yoga I hope you will be feeling very relaxed in your mind and body.

(Break)

FURTHER INSTRUCTION

So let us continue for some time just feeling relaxed in our mind and body, learning to make a connection with our body, learning to feel friendly, gentle and kind towards our body. Let us learn to be open to both pleasant sensations in the body and also unpleasant sensations, learning to accept the sensations just as they are, completely relaxed and the body completely still. Then you may feel the stillness and the peace around you.

Now about eating, how can we use eating as a meditation? As I said this morning, you can learn to eat slowly, at least today. You have enough time for that. Just will see the difference when you eat slowly. Another thing is, try to chew your food consciously. And when you taste the food, just know that you are tasting the food; and when you are swallowing the food, just know that you are swallowing the food. So chewing, tasting, swallowing consciously.

Also when we eat our food, we make judgments, we give pluses and minuses. So please be aware, just know that you are making these judgments. And when you are not making these judgments, know that you are not making the judgments. And all this you'll be able to do only if you eat in silence, so please make an effort to eat in silence and with awareness and you may make some very interesting discoveries about eating. After you finish eating, feel grateful that you have this opportunity to eat in silence and with awareness. It's a very important practice to remember to feel grateful, either before or after eating. And after lunch until we meet at 2:00 p.m., please continue to be silent and please continue to have moment-to-moment awareness in whatever you do. Thank you.