

LIVING MEDITATION

GODWIN SAMARARATNE

GODWIN'S RETREAT TALKS IN HONG KONG 1998

EDITED BY JEANNE MYNETT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE BASICS OF BUDDHIST MEDITATION.....5

- 1: WHY MEDITATION IS BECOMING POPULAR.....5
- 2: ANAPANASATI AND ITS ADVANTAGES.....11
- 3: METTA, KARUNA, MUDITA, UPEKKHA (1).....17
- 4: METTA, KARUNA, MUDITA, UPEKKHA (2).....23

SKILFUL LIVING.....28

MEDITATION IN EVERY LIFE.....28

LIVING WITH AWARENESS.....47

- 1: AWARENESS AND EFFORT.....47
- 2: THE ADVANTAGES OF MEDITATION PRACTICE.....54
- 3: ANAPANASATI & METTA MEDITATION.....60
- 4: SHARING EXPERIENCES AND INSIGHT.....64

PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION

We are very pleased to add a further set of talks on meditation from Godwin's retreats given in Hong Kong in 1998 to those already published under the title *The Gentle Way*, dating from the previous year. In these new talks Godwin re-iterates many of the teachings given in the earlier set, but adding new insights or seeing things from different angles - which he often cited as being one meaning of the term *vipassana*. Godwin's teachings were always developing, both due to his own personal explorations; and also as he worked with meditators of so many different cultures and backgrounds, and as they, too, developed in their practice.

We have entitled this series of talks *Living Meditation* both to stress the relevance of Godwin's meditation teaching to our modern-day lives and issues, and also as a reminder that meditation is a practice to be lived, day in and day out, whatever our changing circumstances or moods, not a practice confined to special times, places or techniques. This is indeed the essence of Godwin's approach to meditation.

In editing the transcripts of these taped talks and discussions I have striven to preserve the vividness and spontaneity of Godwin's teaching style whilst ensuring that the written text remains coherent and free-flowing. This has entailed removing repetitions and irrelevancies, and making necessary grammatical corrections. In general this has entailed only minor alterations to the text; but in the case of the last four days of Godwin's final retreat given at Fa Yim Kok, where Godwin encouraged meditators to share their own experiences and insights, I have restructured the discussions so as to group together sharings and teachings on particular themes. I hope, however, still to have captured some of the free-flowing quality of the interchanges as the discussion developed over the days.

We owe warmest thanks to our friends Yuk Chin, the original compiler of these talks, and the Association of Spiritual Friends of Godwin in Hong Kong for recording, transcribing and making available to us the original text. We trust that through their labours Godwin's teaching can be readily appreciated and absorbed by the reader and then put into practice in daily living.

Jeanne Mynett
November 2007

THE BASICS OF BUDDHIST MEDITATION

TALKS IN CHI LIN NUNNERY, HONG KONG
7TH - 11TH OCTOBER 1998

DAY 1: WHY MEDITATION IS BECOMING POPULAR

GODWIN: Firstly, I would like to welcome each one of you. I am very happy to be back and to see some of my old friends here. It's also nice to see some new faces. I will give a short talk and there will be time for questions, and then we can do some meditation together, and we can end with some chanting, both in Chinese and Pali.

When I arrived here this time my friends told me that there is more interest in meditation now in this country and that there have been many teachers, many masters visiting this country. I was very happy to hear this, and it did not surprise me, because I know that everywhere in the world there is more and more interest in meditation now, especially in Western countries. So the question arises: why is there this interest in meditation in the present world? We can think of different reasons but a general reason is, I think, that there is more and more suffering in this world. So human beings, at least some of them, are seeking ways and means of finding some peace, and a way out of the suffering. So I'll be presenting some aspects of meditation which will help us to experience more peace, and to find a way out of suffering.

MECHANISATION

In this modern world one of the things that is happening because of mechanisation and industrialisation is that human beings are also becoming more and more machine-like, automatic. So in this connection meditation offers two very important solutions.

One point is that as human beings are becoming more and more like machines, they also, like machines, don't seem to have feelings. One aspect of this lack of feelings is that people are becoming more and more violent: more and more violent towards themselves and towards others, and also even becoming violent towards the environment, the surroundings that we are living in. This is why the problem of environment and ecology has also become a very serious problem in the present world.

In this connection meditation of loving-kindness is extremely helpful in working with this aspect of having a lack of feelings, a lack of warmth. A phrase that I often like to use is that meditation of loving-kindness helps us to be our best friend. If you can be your best friend then naturally your behaviour will not be something unskilful, unwholesome to you, and you will create more and more happiness for yourself and for others. So meditation on loving-kindness helps us to open our hearts to ourselves and to others.

Another way meditation of loving-kindness can help us is that, due to different reasons, we may have what I call psychological wounds: wounds created in the past, wounds in relation to what you have done to others, wounds in relation to what others have done to you. And I think there is no human being who has not been wounded in their life. I think a great source of suffering in the modern world is holding onto these wounds, and these wounds can generate lots of suffering for oneself and lots of suffering for others.

Meditation of loving-kindness helps us to heal these wounds by learning to forgive ourselves and learning to forgive others. It's only when we can heal these wounds that we are carrying that we really experience joy and peace in ourselves. And when we experience this joy and peace in ourselves, this can become infectious, it can affect others.

So these are some very important aspects of meditation of loving-kindness which the modern world needs very badly. I would suggest that this is the only way to work with the global violence, the violence that we find in this modern world.

ASPECTS OF AWARENESS

Another important aspect of meditation which can help us to work with human beings becoming more and more mechanical is the practice of awareness, the practice of being present. It's a practice of being alert and awake. And like meditation of loving-kindness, this aspect of being aware also has many benefits. One is, it helps us to be conscious, it helps us to know what is happening in us, in our mind and body, from moment to moment as far as possible. And this awareness can help us to develop insight, to see what are we doing to ourselves and to others. Again to see how we create suffering in ourselves and how we create suffering in others.

And what awareness helps us to experience is how sometimes - or even most of the time - we create our own suffering. When we see with awareness how we create our own suffering, then it becomes clear that it is only we who can free ourselves of the suffering that we have created. Sometimes I like to define meditation as a way of discovering the medicine for the sickness that we create ourselves.

Another aspect of awareness is that it helps us to experience the present moment. It is interesting that most of the time we live either in the past or in the future. And we hardly know that we are living in the past and living in the future because sometimes it happens habitually, mechanically, unconsciously. So here again awareness helps us to realise how we are using the past and the future in ways which can create problems for ourselves and for others.

Now we do need to use the past and we do need to use the future. And one simple way of using the past and the future creatively is if we can learn from the past, whatever has happened in the past, if we can see the past as a learning experience, as a teacher. So whatever mistakes we have made in the past, rather than hold onto them and then feel guilty and suffer from them, we can ask ourselves: What can I learn from my past mistakes? It can be a very useful way of coming to terms with the past. Otherwise what happens is that we carry the past as a burden. So this type of thinking, this type of practice enables us to let go of the burden that we are carrying most of the time.

And in the same way we can use the future, again as a friend. As we know, when we think of the future sometimes what happens is that we feel anxious, we feel insecure. But if we can make friends with the future and learn to be open to the future, we will be learning to relate to the future in a much more creative way. So with awareness we can learn to experience the present moment when we breathe consciously. And then in relation to the past and the future, if we can see the past as a teacher and if we can see the future as a friend, this will be a really beautiful, creative, happy and peaceful way of living.

Another way we can use awareness is to use awareness to learn, to discover, to explore, to investigate what is happening in our mind and body. A real challenge we have in everyday

life is how to relate to unpleasant emotions. One problem modern man is confronted with is the problem of stress. It's a problem everywhere. So now people are finding ways and means of working with stress. It is interesting that there are now workshops, courses, which are called stress management courses. They're not trying to get rid of stress, they want to manage it, control it. So awareness helps us to find out under what circumstances we feel stressed, what really happens to us, mentally and physically, when we experience stress. In this way, we can explore, learn, investigate, any unpleasant emotion that we experience.

UNPLEASANT EMOTIONS

I think everyone here is familiar with other unpleasant emotions like anxiety, fear, sadness, guilt - all these are quite familiar to us. And what normally happens is that when we experience them, we have no way, we have no tools to work with them. So human beings have become helpless victims of these unpleasant emotions which really control us, overwhelm us and affect us. In meditation, there are techniques and ways to work with these unpleasant emotions. In fact there has been a very interesting book that has come out recently, "Emotional Intelligence". Has anyone heard of this book? So the author, who is a Buddhist, says that human beings are trying to develop more and more high I.Q., but what is more important is to develop an intelligent way of working with emotions. This book has become a best-seller, and there have been lots of workshops on this problem, because in this modern world unpleasant emotions are a real challenge.

So here again, meditation, especially the aspect of awareness, helps us to work with these emotions. One method is not to repress them, not to control them, nor to express them but just to be aware of the emotions when they are there. In fact in meditation there are other tools, techniques, for working with these emotions. We cannot prevent these emotions from arising but what we can learn is how to work with them when they arise rather than continue to suffer as a result of them.

Maybe another aspect of meditation is that it helps us to learn to be our own teacher, to be self-reliant, to have complete confidence in ourselves. This is a hard teaching but it's a very important teaching: to develop your own resources, to develop your own self-reliance, to develop your own tools, how to work with suffering when it arises. So what is the result of that? We learn to take responsibility for what is happening in us, without blaming others, without blaming the surroundings that we find ourselves in. When such a change takes place in our minds, then we'll be able to handle whatever arises in a particular environment, in whatever surroundings we find ourselves.

I would like to conclude by presenting a Buddhist simile which shows how we can live in any environment and learn how not to be affected by that environment. And the simile is a lotus flower. As you know, a lotus flower grows in muddy waters. But though it is surrounded by muddy, dirty water the lotus is not affected by what is around it.

So in this modern world, there can be lots of challenges, lots of difficult situations, lots of problems that might arise, but with the practice of meditation we'll be able to see them as challenges and learn, like a lotus, not to be affected by the surroundings that we find ourselves in.

So now if there are any questions you can please ask them. It is very important to ask questions.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

RETREATANT: *When joy and bliss arise during meditation and when the body starts to tremble, is that O.K?*

GODWIN: I'm happy that you are experiencing joy and bliss. It's a very important aspect of the practice to experience joy and bliss in meditation. So when joy and bliss arise, when the body trembles, just know that the body is trembling, just try to find out what exactly is the sensation you are experiencing and just be with the sensation. What is important when we have these positive emotions is not to hold onto them.

Any other questions please?

RETREATANT: *How to use our future in a proper way? For example, in the office when I deal with my boss, at first I may find that my boss has got some incorrect or improper views and then I have this anxiety that the situation may turn bad in the future and I find emotion arises. Then I try to alter my boss's attitude, and then I think that the situation may be O.K. But afterwards I find that I have not handled the situation properly. I could have done better. So my question is: How can I ensure that what I'm doing at the present moment is the correct way to handle the matter, rather than having done it first and then look back and regret what I have done?*

GODWIN: So just a few practical suggestions on how to work with such bosses. One thing you said is that you would like to change the attitude of the boss, which may not succeed. Rather you should learn to change your attitude towards the boss. If you can, use the boss as your spiritual friend because the boss is teaching you something, to look at your own mind. So this is the importance of awareness. The emphasis is not on what the boss is saying or what the boss is doing. The emphasis is on looking at your own mind, how you are relating to what the boss is saying or what the boss is doing.

So it'll be interesting to start experimenting with your boss. Then rather than feeling angry with him or seeing him as a problem, as I said, you learn to see him as a spiritual friend. So you can find out: when I'm with the boss, what are the emotions that arise in me? How long will these emotions stay with me? You can experiment: Now today, this is what happened with the boss. Now let me see what happens with the boss tomorrow. So you are looking forward to being with the boss because it's a very valuable learning experience for you. You can really feel grateful that you have such a good boss, that the boss is really showing you a mirror to watch your own mind. Instead of giving a minus to the boss, and giving a minus to yourself, you can give plusses to yourself and plusses to the boss.

And these suggestions that I have offered one can use in any situation in relating to people, it need not necessarily be to the boss.

I think there's time for one last question.

RETREATANT: *Master, normally people practise meditation by sitting down with their legs crossed but what happens if I'm a little bit old and I have kidney problem which makes it difficult to sit too long to practise meditation? Is there no way for me to practise meditation, or alternatively can I do meditation by lying down on my back?*

GODWIN: There's still hope for you! You can just sit down on a chair with your spine erect. And as you rightly said, you can use the lying down posture. But what is important is that

in that posture you have to be very alert and awake because from lying down you might start snoring; but it is still interesting to learn to meditate lying down.

I'm very happy that you have asked some very good, practical questions. So now let us take a short break, about 5 minutes, and during this time please, as I said, see how far you can be aware of whatever you're doing. So when you are standing, when you are walking, whatever you are doing, please try to slow down your movements; and as I was emphasising the importance of awareness, just try to practise it as far as possible. And being silent will be helpful in practising this awareness.

So please come back after 5 minutes if there's a need to go outside.

[Break]

GUIDED MEDITATION ON AWARENESS

GODWIN: The meditation which we are going to do is something very simple. In my talk I emphasised the importance of being aware, being mindful, being awake. So let us develop this very important skill.

During the sitting we can try to be aware, mindful, alert, from moment to moment as far as possible. Just knowing. Just knowing what is happening in our mind and body from moment to moment.

I also emphasised the importance of friendliness, gentleness. So we will try to combine awareness with friendliness and gentleness. Feeling friendly and gentle to whatever is happening in our mind and body as far as possible.

So as I said it is something very simple that we are going to do now.

You can please close your eyes.

If you're having thoughts, just know what thoughts you are having very sharply, very clearly.

If you are experiencing sensations, just know what sensation you are experiencing from moment to moment.

You can experience the present moment, just feeling the peace and the stillness in this room.

Feeling what it is to sit with your body completely still.

If the body is still, the mind may become still, and you can feel the stillness around you.

Feeling friendly and gentle towards our mind and body.

[Bell]

Now please don't think that the meditation is over. Please continue to know what is happening in your mind and body from moment to moment. And now will you please open your eyes.

In a way, there is no beginning and ending of meditation. This is the importance of awareness, of knowing.

Thank you. Thank you very much for sitting so peacefully and calmly.

Let us do some chanting now.

So I'll be presenting three chants. The first chant is Buddham Saranam Gacchami, Dhammam Saranam Gacchami, Sangham Saranam Gacchami. The next chant is Sadhu, which means Well Said. In traditional Buddhist countries you will hear this word very often. And then the last Pali chant is Santi which means Peace. Then we'll be ending with some Chinese chanting.

So while chanting let us try to experience the present moment, the here and the now, with the help of the chant.

[Chanting]

Thank you very much. Please make an effort to put into practice some of the suggestions that I made. Please learn to be your best friend and also to be a friend of others. Learn to forgive yourself and others and then heal any wounds that you are carrying.

Please make an effort to live consciously, to live with awareness, to live with a mind that is fully awake.

And as I suggested, try to work with unpleasant emotions when they arise.

Please try to find a new direction in your life, a new way of living where you will live in such a meaningful way that you will be not creating any suffering for yourself or any suffering for others.

And may you experience more joy, more peace and friendliness to oneself.

Thank you very much and I hope to see you tomorrow. Tomorrow we'll be speaking about the technique of being aware of our breathing, what advantages we can experience through this technique.

DAY 2: ANAPANASATI AND ITS ADVANTAGES

GODWIN: First I would like to welcome each one of you. I'll be giving a talk, and then afterwards we'll have a discussion, and then we'll meditate. After meditation we can do some chanting, both Pali chanting and also chanting in Chinese.

The subject that has been suggested to me today is to speak about the benefits of meditation on our breath. So we can reflect on the question as to why the Buddha chose the breath as an object of meditation.

Now one thing is, as I said yesterday that a very important aspect of meditation is developing awareness, mindfulness. So here we can use our breath to develop awareness. In Pali this technique is called *Anapanasati*, developing awareness, mindfulness, in relation to the in-breath and the out-breath. We can use the breath to develop the practice of mindfulness and awareness because we are breathing all the time and the breath is with us all the time. Ajahn Chah, one of the meditation masters in Thailand, has said that if you have time to breathe, then you have time to meditate. So this is the first point I want to make as to why the Buddha might have chosen breathing as a technique for meditation.

EXPERIENCING THE PRESENT MOMENT

Another important aspect of meditation is learning to experience the present moment, the here and the now. So when we breathe, it is very interesting, we always breathe in the present, we always breathe in the here and the now. Sometimes I like to refer to our breath as our friend. If we make a connection with our breath as a friend, then whenever we think of our friend, our friend will help us to experience the present moment. Whenever we are lost in thoughts about the past and the future, and there is confusion and disorder in our mind, we have only to think of our friend and immediately we can experience the present moment.

Another important aspect is that, as we all know, we are sometimes affected by our thoughts. Most of the time thoughts control us. Here again our friend can help us to learn to let go of the thoughts, maybe even for the first time; to learn to control the thoughts rather than allow the thoughts to control us by being with our friend and experiencing the present moment, letting go of the thoughts about the past, letting go of the thoughts about the future.

And related to our thoughts are our emotions. There's a very strong connection between our thinking, between our thoughts, and emotions. So sometimes thoughts can create emotions, and then what happens is that when we have these emotions we can make them bigger than they really are.

Here again, if we can remember our friend immediately it will help us to recover from our emotions. Because if we can spend a few minutes with the breath in such a situation it will help us to find some space in our mind and then that space can help us to recover from whatever emotions we are experiencing. You can experiment with this. You can try it for yourself.

Another useful thing our friend can show us is our state of mind. We all know what happens to our friend when we are affected by a strong emotion like anger, fear, excitement, stress and insecurity. What happens to our breath? It moves very, very fast. So it can be a

very useful signal, a very reliable signal to show us what is happening in our mind. If we have problems with an emotion like anger, our friend will immediately show to us from the way the breathing moves that we are getting angry. So it can be a very useful signal, as I said, and then if you can listen to the signal, heed the signal, you'll be able to recover from that anger or whatever emotion immediately.

In the same way when our mind is calm, when our mind is relaxed, when our mind is still, what happens to our friend? The breath also becomes calm. Sometimes it becomes so subtle that you don't even realise that you are breathing. So if we can learn to make a connection with our friend, the friend will always tell us what is happening in our mind. Some of the friends we have can sometimes be wrong - or maybe most of the time they can be wrong - but you'll realise this friend is always right, this friend is always reliable.

Our friend also shows us about the state of our body. Here again, the way we breathe can indicate to us our state of physical well-being, and also our state of mental well-being. If you can focus attention on the breath sometimes you'll realise the breathing can be very relaxed, sometimes the breathing can be very deep, and sometimes also shallow. And when you realise that your breathing is shallow it will always show that you are having tension in your body.

It is interesting that our friend will show that when our body is tense how naturally that will create an emotion; it will indicate the connection between feeling tense and our emotions. And one of the ways of letting go of the tension is by using our friend. Sometimes in such a situation, if you can breathe consciously, if you can take some deep breaths, you might be able to relax your mind and body to a great extent almost immediately.

SAMATHA AND VIPASSANA

In Buddhist meditation there are two aspects. One is the aspect of experiencing calm and tranquillity, which is called *samatha*. The other aspect is developing *vipassana*, insight or wisdom. So it is interesting that this object of meditation, this technique, is relevant to both these aspects. When we are being aware of the in-breath and the out-breath, if we can learn not to react to what is happening then the mind becomes calm and tranquil. And then this technique also helps us to develop wisdom or insight, *vipassana*.

One aspect of *vipassana* is to experience the fact of impermanence, the fact of change. And when we are aware of the breath, we'll realise how whatever is happening in our mind and body, including the breathing, changes from moment to moment. So if you are having thoughts you'll immediately realise how thoughts are arising, how thoughts are passing away. And the same thing becomes very clear with our breath.

Here again, if we can be aware of the sensations we'll realise how from moment to moment there are varieties of sensations taking place, and again how sensations are changing from moment to moment. So we learn to be open to any changes that are taking place in our mind and body from moment to moment.

This insight which we develop through being open to change and impermanence internally will help us also to be open to changes, the fact of impermanence, when it happens externally. As you know, sometimes we have no control over what is happening inside us and we have no control over what is happening externally, in certain events in our life. Suffering arises when we resist these changes, when we resist impermanence. So if we can really be open to impermanence, and understand the nature of impermanence, this is a very

powerful way of overcoming suffering. And as I said, we develop this very important insight: how suffering is created by resisting change and how we can overcome suffering by being open to change and to an understanding of impermanence.

Another important insight that can arise in relation to our breath is that we can have moments when we realise that there is only the breathing that is taking place, the rise and the fall of the breath, and that there is no ego, no sense of "I" or "me" that is breathing, but just the process of breathing going on from moment to moment.

Another very important insight is to realise that we are all inter-connected, inter-related, inter-being, although we think we are separate, foreign to each other in some sense. But when we reflect on breathing, we realise that what is common to all beings is this fact of breathing. So this should enable us to have a feeling of oneness with all beings around us because what unites us, what is common to all beings, is this fact of breathing. And we have to realise that we breathe the same air, that in relation to the air that we breathe we can't separate the breath and say the air that I'm breathing is mine. So there is this universality.

According to a Buddhist text, when we die, when we pass away, those who have meditated on this object can easily remember the breath at that time, if they are conscious, of course. I know some people who are working with those who are dying, and one of the techniques that they use in helping people to die is to get them to breathe consciously at that time, to learn to be conscious of their breathing. So when we are dying, if we can experience the present moment with our friend, then we have a good chance of dying peacefully.

So our good friend helps us to live peacefully, and it can also help us to sleep peacefully. Before you fall asleep if you can spend some time just to relax your mind and body with the breath you can sleep peacefully. And then we can die peacefully. Is there anything more that we need to live in this world peacefully?

So if you have any questions we can discuss them. Please feel free to ask any question, especially about this technique of meditation that we have discussed.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

RETREATANT: *Yesterday we heard from you that some people are teaching other people how to manage tension, and you were saying that it's best to get rid of it. I'm very glad to hear you follow up on what you said yesterday by telling us how to get rid of tension and other emotions through watching the breathing or having smooth and deep breathing. Can you elaborate more on this please, because it is very useful. Thank you.*

GODWIN: So as I said, when we have emotions, unpleasant emotions, what makes it worse is our thinking, our thoughts. It is very interesting when we have an emotion. If you have space in the mind to watch your thoughts you'll realise how thoughts come so quickly at that time and how you can create a big story about what is happening. And sometimes a small emotion can really blow up just by this process of thinking.

Maybe a practical example would be if someone has made you angry, at least you think that someone has made you angry. Then what happens to you? You'll be having thoughts about that person, how that person has been behaving in the past and all such things, so that your whole attention will be centred on that person; and with the negative thoughts about that person your anger becomes worse and worse. In such a situation we can really lose control. Actually at that moment the emotions and the thoughts really control us, they really

overwhelm us, as we all know. So for someone who has been making a connection with our friend in this way, at that moment, if they can spend some time with the breath, just the in-breath and the out-breath, just being completely with it, then at least for a few minutes the fermenting of that emotion with thoughts will become less.

And as I said in relation to tensions in our body, if we can really consciously and deliberately do some deep breathing this can also to a great extent help to work with that tension. In a way, one can say that being with the breath or just being with the sensation can have the same effects because we are experiencing the present moment both with the help of the breath and the sensation in the body.

An interesting process to discover is how thoughts and emotions, are involved in creating tension. Supposing someone is afraid of dogs. When such a person sees a dog, the thought immediately comes: Ah there is a dog; maybe the dog is going to bite me! And very quickly that thought gives rise to emotions. Emotions of fear, anxiety, insecurity can come. And then that can give rise to tension in the body. So with meditation, if we can see this process taking place it can be very useful, there can be very important discoveries that we can make about these things. And the process continues further: we react to the tension with thoughts and then that leads to further emotions. So it really becomes what can be called a vicious circle.

So how can we interrupt this vicious circle? How can we break this vicious circle? One way - one very powerful way - is to spend some time with the breath, because then immediately your mind comes to the present and with that all these things, the process that has been taking place as I described earlier drops away, there can be some space created by this focusing on our friend.

I took some time to explain the process of emotions in this way because I think we all can relate to what I have been saying. So what I would suggest is to experiment with what I have been saying. Just find out for yourself whether it works.

Any other questions please.

RETREATANT: *Some people when they teach this breathing technique mention that there should be four steps. They are soft, shallow, smooth and long. When I tried to follow these four steps I found that my heart beats faster. And when I counted the breathing I found that even my breathing became faster. So how do we deal with this situation?*

GODWIN: I'm not surprised, because it seems that you are trying to force the breathing in an artificial way. What is important is to spend some time just allowing the body to breathe naturally. Our friend knows very well how to breathe. Even when we are asleep our friend continues to breathe. In fact this is what I'll be emphasising when we try to experiment with this technique, to spend some time first just allowing the body to breathe naturally, without controlling it, without manipulating it, without interfering with it. Then in a very simple, natural way just knowing, just being aware of what is happening to the body when the body is inhaling and exhaling. So it is a very simple technique, but we are very good at complicating simple things!

It's interesting that in the texts it says that when the breath is long, you just know that the breath is long, when the breath is short, you know that it is short. So whatever is happening naturally, you just know it, that is all. I would like to suggest to you to please try out the way I'll be presenting the technique, and after you finish please come and tell me what your experience was.

I think there is time for one more question please.

RETREATANT: *Master, when we meditate, when we are doing meditation, very often we cannot meditate well. Our body, our mind or breathing is not peaceful and calm. What should we do? Shall we just stop and do something else?*

GODWIN: It's a very useful question that has been asked.

So I would like to offer a few suggestions. One is that when we sit to meditate, please don't have any expectations of what should happen or what shouldn't happen. And without any expectations you just know whatever is happening. What is important is not to judge, not to give a plus, not to give a minus, but just know from moment to moment what is happening in your mind and body, with some openness.

The whole idea of meditation is to experience freedom, to be free of suffering, but sometimes the way we try to meditate with all our expectations, we create suffering for ourselves. So if we have an expectation that our minds should be calm, that we should be having only positive experiences, then if they arise what we do is hold onto them. And when we are unable to hold onto them, that creates suffering. And then when the mind is not calm, when the mind is not relaxed, you will think you're not meditating rightly and then that is creating suffering. So without this idea of positive and negative, just be open, just be friendly to whatever is happening from moment to moment with awareness - that can give us immediate freedom. So I'll be emphasising this aspect when I'll be presenting this technique.

So now please take a short break and then during the short break, as we did yesterday, please try to develop awareness when you are moving; try to move slowly and consciously as far as possible, and what can help us in this is to practise complete silence during this short break.

GUIDED MEDITATION ON BREATHING

Let us begin the meditation without any expectations of what should or should not happen.

We will begin with what is called the beginner's mind. Not knowing what is going to happen.

Let us begin by being aware of our body. The different sensations, the different movements in our body.

Let us learn to feel friendly towards our body.

Feel what it is to sit with the body completely still.

See if you can feel the stillness around you.

And now please allow the body to breathe naturally.

The body knows very well how to breathe. Just allow the body to do what it likes.

Now please find out what happens in the body when the body is breathing naturally. The different movements, the different sensations in the body when the body is breathing.

Let us just be with the different sensations, the different movements in our body from moment to moment.

Just being with our friend. Experiencing the present moment with the help of our friend.

If you are having thoughts, just know that you have thoughts and then come back to your friend.

If the mind is calm, you know that the mind is calm. If the mind is not calm, you know that the mind is not calm. No plus, no minus.

What is important is to be with our friend.

[Bell]

Now please don't think that the meditation is over. Just continue to know what is happening in your mind and body from moment to moment. And whatever you do, please do it mindfully: opening your eyes, changing your posture.

There should be no beginning and ending of meditation.

Now let us do some chanting, and while chanting let us also learn to use the chanting to experience the present moment. And I would like everyone to join in. It's very beautiful when there is group chanting.

[Chanting]

Please try to make a connection with your friend the breath, and the friend will always help you, especially when you are not doing sitting meditation. Our friend can be very useful in our everyday life.

So thank you very much for the beautiful chanting and also for asking very good practical questions.

Tomorrow and the day after we'll be discussing some very important aspects of the Dhamma. How to develop certain qualities in the heart, which is a very important thing.

Once again, thank you very much.

DAY 3: METTA, KARUNA, MUDITA, UPEKKHA (1)

GODWIN: Once again I would like to welcome each and every one of you.

So today and tomorrow I am going to talk about a very important aspect in Buddhist meditation. It is related to developing four very important spiritual qualities in ourselves. They are called "The Four Sublime or Beautiful States". They are also called "The Divine Abodes", because when we develop these qualities, we are like divine beings, like gods.

I would like to see these four qualities as our friends because if we can encourage these four friends to be with us most of the time, this will help us to experience a lot of joy and lightness and it will also help us to bring joy and lightness to others. To put it in another way, when these four friends are not with us this can create lots of suffering for ourselves and lots of suffering for others.

And these four qualities in Pali sound so soothing, so nice. They are *Metta*, *Karuna*, *Mudita*, *Upekkha*. So *Metta* is loving-kindness, friendliness. *Karuna* is compassion. *Mudita* is sympathetic joy. And *Upekkha* is having a non-reactive, equanimous mind.

Today I will be talking about the first two qualities, the first two friends, and tomorrow I'll be talking about the last two friends.

METTA MEDITATION

Metta in simple terminology means just friendliness. So the question is: where do we begin this friendliness? It is psychologically interesting that we are to begin with ourselves. I think it is difficult to be friendly to others unless you are friendly to yourself. A phrase that I would like to use is: *Metta* enables us to be our own best friend. But we don't realise sometimes that we can be our own worst enemy. And generally speaking we see enemies outside ourselves, and maybe all our life we are trying to find and get rid of the external enemies but we don't realise, as I said, that we can be our worst enemy.

In what ways do we become our worst enemy? One is that we can be extremely critical and hard on ourselves. The phrase that I like to use is: we give ourselves minuses - it can become a very strong habit. And when we have this habit of giving ourselves only minuses we'll also be giving minuses to other people. We can create a hell where only minuses exist. So meditation of loving-kindness helps us to see this very clearly, how we become our own enemies by giving ourselves minuses and giving minuses to others; and then we learn to see more and more the positive qualities in ourselves and in others.

In this connection there is a beautiful word that is used in the Dhamma, the word is rejoicing. To rejoice in our own good qualities. To rejoice in the positive aspects in ourselves. Now at this moment every one of you can rejoice that you have made a commitment as meditators. Seeing more and more the positive in ourselves, and learning to rejoice in our own goodness in this way can bring about lots of joy and lightness. And when we experience more and more joy and lightness in us, then it can also be infectious, it can also influence and inspire others to experience more joy and lightness.

In the Dhammapada, one of the most important books containing the Buddha's teaching, there is a very interesting phrase: that we should overcome our suffering through joy. Sometimes we are trying to overcome suffering through suffering. But when we experience

more and more joy and lightness, then when suffering arises, when we experience unpleasant emotions, it becomes very easy to handle them.

Another aspect of rejoicing is that when we take to meditation in our spiritual life, naturally we learn to lead a harmless life, a skilful life, a wholesome life, not creating suffering for ourselves and not creating suffering for others or harming others. This comes under moral or ethical behaviour which is very much emphasised in the Buddha's teaching. And here again there is a beautiful phrase, I would like to use the Pali words, *Anavajja Sukha*, which means the joy and bliss that comes from harmlessness, joy and bliss that comes from a skilful and wholesome way of living. So we see clearly how from being our own worst enemy we can learn to be our best friend.

Another way in which we can be our own enemy is when we hold on to the wounds that we carry in relation to what has happened in the past. Generally speaking wounds can be created by what you have done to others and what others have done to you. In relation to what you have done to others, a very destructive emotion that we can be holding onto is guilt. And with wounds created in relation to what others have done to us, the emotion that we can be carrying within us is hatred and ill will.

And when we have these unhealed wounds it can affect us in many ways. It can affect even our body sometimes. We can have psychosomatic illnesses which are created due to psychological reasons. It can also affect our body when it creates certain tensions in the body. And it can affect our sleep and we will be having dreams in relation to some of these unhealed wounds. So we can be experiencing sadness, we can be experiencing fear and guilt even while we are sleeping! And at the time that we die some of these unhealed wounds can surface in a very strong way so that we'll not be able even to die peacefully.

So it is extremely important for us to learn how to heal these wounds. Here again meditation of loving-kindness can be extremely helpful in learning just to forgive ourselves and to forgive others. Forgive ourselves by realising that we are human. Forgive ourselves by realising that we are still not enlightened, we are still imperfect. And in the same way, forgive others by realising that they are being human, that they are also imperfect like us. And this is also a way of learning to let go of the past, otherwise we carry this past as a very heavy burden that we are holding onto. It is only when we can really heal these wounds and let go of the past and the burden that we are carrying that we can really experience joy, peace and more compassion for ourselves and for others.

THE MEANING OF COMPASSION

Now I would like to say something about our second friend, *Karuna*. Usually *Karuna* is associated with seeing other people suffering. It is extremely important to learn to do something, to have friendliness when you see such suffering. In this world, as I said on the first day, there can be more and more suffering in particular situations. So we should develop this important spiritual quality of compassion where we feel the need to do something, even small things, little things, when we see someone suffering. One spiritual teacher said that it is not so important to do big acts of loving-kindness for other people when you see suffering, but the small everyday acts, the little acts that we can do are very important.

And this reminds me of a quotation by the Buddha where he was emphasising the importance of loving-kindness when he was addressing a group of monks. He told them that if you can practise loving-kindness during the time it takes to snap your fingers you're

worthy of being monks. So it shows that even practising loving-kindness for a few minutes is really good.

In the same way, as I was saying, doing little acts of kindness, sometimes talking to a person, sometimes smiling at a person, such little actions even for a few minutes are a way of developing this quality. And when you develop this quality, wherever you are you are bound to see such opportunities; even travelling in a bus or going along the road, you're bound to notice situations where you can be of some help or show some kindness to others.

And I would like to suggest that you should also learn to relate to yourself with this quality of *Karuna*. When you see yourself suffering, when you realise that you are suffering yourself, you'll be your worst enemy if you're just allowing yourself to continue to suffer in this way. So having *Karuna* for yourself is trying to do something about your own suffering.

Now we realise the reason why these qualities are called beautiful qualities, why they are divine qualities, because they help us to do something about our own suffering and they help us to do something about the suffering of others. And here again, as with loving-kindness, when you develop this quality of *Karuna* and when you can see that whatever help you have given is having the desired effect, you can be very happy about it. And when you can see that you can do something about your own suffering this can develop lots of self-confidence, and you can be happy that you have found a way to work with your suffering and have also found a way to eradicate the suffering of others.

Tomorrow I'll be speaking about the third quality and the fourth quality, but now we can have a discussion, so if you have any questions please feel free to ask them.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

RETREATANT: *I would like to ask if there is any limit regarding compassion and loving-kindness. For example, I have a friend who asked me to lend him some money because he said he was poor but I found out later that this friend went gambling. The first time I forgave my friend, and when he came back to ask for money I gave him some money again and again a second and a third time and forgave him. So is there a limit to forgiveness and loving-kindness and compassion?*

GODWIN: Very good question. Because in everyday life we sometimes have to face such situations. So it is very important to realise that loving-kindness doesn't mean allowing others to exploit you. This can be considered as idiotic compassion. In this connection there is a very interesting story. It is one of my favourite stories. I would like to share this story with you. It comes from the Indian tradition and the story is about a cobra who was practising loving-kindness.

So there was this cobra practising loving-kindness in the forest saying: May all beings be well, may all beings be happy, may all beings be peaceful. And an old woman who was collecting firewood saw this cobra and mistook this cobra for a rope. So she used the cobra to tie up the firewood that she was carrying. As the cobra was doing loving-kindness practice, the cobra allowed this woman to do anything.

So the woman carried the bundle of firewood home and then the cobra escaped but with a lot of physical pain and physical wounds. And then he went to meet his teacher, and the cobra said: See what happened to me! I was practising loving-kindness, and now see the wounds and all the pain that I'm experiencing in my body! The teacher very calmly said: You have not been practising loving-kindness. You have been practising idiotic compassion,

because you should have shown that you were a cobra. You should at least have hissed! So in relating to people like the person you described you have to learn to hiss, and in doing so you'll also be doing a service for that person.

Any other question please?

RETREATANT: *Master Godwin, I have a problem I would like to present here. A couple of times in my life, in fact recently, lots of things were going wrong, things like losing control, and it was just like I was in the eye of a hurricane, spinning and spinning, or like a rat climbing on the wheel trying to keep up with the spin. I don't understand how my own mind could create such a horror. Do you have any idea what really is causing it and how to get out of it?*

GODWIN: So I would like you to meet with you personally and I would like to get more details about what exactly is happening, but in the meantime I might try to offer one or two suggestions.

The first suggestion I would like to offer, which in fact I should have mentioned when I was speaking about loving-kindness, is learning to make friends with such unpleasant experiences. When we have unpleasant experiences, whether it is physical pain or mental pain, what normally happens is we don't like it, we resist it, and then the result is we start hating ourselves for it. By hating such experiences, by resisting such experiences, by disliking them, sometimes we might be giving them more power and more energy. So loving-kindness can be used in this context by making friends with this situation that you are experiencing. A phrase I like to use sometimes is just to tell yourself: It is O.K. that I don't feel O.K. This is the first suggestion I would like to offer.

The second suggestion I would like to offer is that when you make friends with it, are open to it, then you can explore, investigate, learn about what you are going through. Sometimes we may have such an experience when we have unrealistic goals in life, when we have expectations how we should behave, how others should behave, how life should be. Sometimes we can be making strong demands of how things should be. And when these demands are met we're happy but when these demands are not met, this is where we start to suffer, this is where we start to hate ourselves, hate others and hate life. So with friendliness you can learn to find out, learn, explore, more about what you are really going through.

The third suggestion I would like to offer, which is related to the second suggestion, is to find out whether this condition is created by thought, whether it is created by emotion, or whether it is created by sensation. Sometimes when we have such unpleasant experiences it's a very good practice, as I was suggesting yesterday, to spend some time with the sensations in the body or with the breath in the body. That technique can help you to create some space and then you'll realise that these sensations are changing all the time. So if we can really be open to the sensations, whatever we are experiencing in our mind and body, and open to the changes, then whatever happens to a great extent you'll be able to relate to it in a different way.

And the last suggestion I would like to offer is: find out when you don't have unpleasant experiences. It is extremely important in everyday life if you are bothered by a particular emotion to know the times when that emotion is not there. Perhaps if you can be open to that you might be surprised that during the day there are moments when this condition that you are describing is completely absent. I'm sure you're not experiencing it now, for instance, because I can see you smiling.

Maybe one last point is, if we can learn to see such experiences as valuable experiences, as opportunities to learn, then it's a beautiful way to live. To learn from unpleasant experiences, to learn from conditions which we think are negative, to really see them as opportunities to use for our spiritual growth.

So I would suggest you try to use some of these tools and if still they won't work you can either call me or to come and see me.

I think there is time for one last question.

RETREATANT: *Usually when nothing happens it is very easy to say let's have loving-kindness to ourselves and to others. But when things happen, for example, somebody says or does something and makes us very unhappy, my experience is I get very angry, to such an extent that I completely forget everything about loving-kindness and I can't even sleep for a few nights, and this hatred remains for a few days. I want to know whether you have had any such experience. If you have, how did you handle it?*

GODWIN: Very good question. I'm happy that you're presenting very practical questions relating to everyday life. So firstly I will share how I work with such situations, which hopefully will help you to work with what you described.

The first point is: don't be surprised. Because as I said, we are still human, we are still imperfect. So as long as we are human, as long as we are imperfect, we are bound to get angry, so why should we be surprised?

The second point is: don't give yourself a minus because you are getting angry. By giving yourself a minus, what you are doing is getting angry about the anger and you're hating yourself because you have anger.

The third point is that if you are unable to observe the anger at the time that it arises, at least later on you can start reflecting on what happened. So why did I get angry? Why did I use those words? What really made me lose my control? As I said in answer to the earlier question, our failures can become very valuable spiritual friends. And this kind of reflection has to be done in a very friendly, gentle way rather than doing it in a very hard way, beating yourself and unnecessarily experiencing guilt and remorse in relation to what has happened. And then as I said in my talk, you can forgive yourself: I'm still human, I got angry, but let me see now when I meet that person next week or whatever, how I will be relating to that person. So then you'll be learning from such experiences, then you can experiment with such situations.

And if we need to have an ideal, the ideal should not be that we will not get angry. The more realistic ideal we can have in relation to anger is, how soon we can recover from that anger? This is the importance of practising awareness in everyday life. So that if you can practise such awareness, and as I said yesterday, if you can have a connection with your breath, then as you are getting angry the breath will tell you that you are getting angry, and with awareness you can notice it and that will help you to recover from that anger.

I once met a woman who had a terrible temper, anger was her big problem. I gave her a simple suggestion and it worked very well. I told her to carry a mirror in her pocket. And I told her whenever she got angry, please look at the mirror, don't open your mouth but just look at the mirror. And when she did it she was shocked to see the reflection in it. So whenever she did that she felt bad about how she was looking because she was concerned

about her appearance. And there was an immediate recovery from the anger and sometimes she was even able to laugh at her anger.

I'm afraid there is no time left now so we will take a short break and during this short break, as I was saying the last two days, please move slowly with awareness and also please maintain silence and enjoy the space that silence creates in your mind. And please come back after a few minutes.

[Break]

GUIDED MEDITATION ON LOVING-KINDNESS

Feel grateful that we have this body, that we can use this body for our practice.

Can you see yourself as your best friend? Can you really feel it? Feel it in every part of your body, your whole being.

Feeling it in the area of your heart and allowing your heart to open up to yourself, like a flower.

And feeling yourself as your best friend, can you forgive yourself for any mistakes you have made in the past?

In forgiving yourself, really say to yourself and feel these words: May I be well; may I be happy; may I be peaceful; may I be free of suffering.

For anyone who does not have such wounds, you can feel happy that you have healed your wounds.

For those who have wounds in relation to what others have done to you, let us heal these wounds by learning to forgive others, by learning to let go of the past.

Learning to let go of any hatred or ill-will that you are carrying.

Can you think of those others and wish that they also be well, that they also be happy, that they may be peaceful and that they may be free of suffering.

In healing our wounds may we experience more joy, more lightness, more friendliness to ourselves and more friendliness to others.

Let us now learn to rejoice that we are learning to develop loving-kindness to ourselves, to develop loving-kindness to others.

Before we start to chant let us just feel the peace and the stillness in this room.

[Chanting]

May you all be well, be happy, be peaceful, and be free of suffering. And may all beings be well. May all beings be happy. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free of suffering.

Thank you very much.

DAY 4: METTA, KARUNA, MUDITA, UPEKKHA (2)

GODWIN: I would like to welcome everyone once again.

Yesterday I spoke about the importance of four qualities, four beautiful qualities which the Buddha emphasised. They are *Metta*, loving-kindness; *Karuna*, compassion; *Mudita*, sympathetic joy; and *Upekkha*, equanimity.

According to the Buddha's teaching, when we develop these important spiritual qualities we become like gods. That's why they are sometimes called "The Divine Abodes". I would like to see them as four of our very beautiful friends. When we have these four friends within us they will make us beautiful, they will make us experience more joy and lightness and this can also affect others around us.

Yesterday I spoke of two of these qualities: *Metta*, loving-kindness and *Karuna*, compassion.

Metta can be seen very briefly as learning to be your best friend and then also learning to be a friend to others. *Metta* helps us to open our heart to ourselves. It also enables us to open our heart to others.

Karuna is when you see suffering in yourself and when you see suffering in others, doing something to overcome your own suffering and doing something to overcome the suffering of others. This is developing the quality of *Karuna*, compassion.

In this modern world where there is a lot of suffering and the suffering manifests itself in many different ways, it is extremely important to develop this quality of *Karuna* in relation to others and in relation to your own suffering. In this connection the Buddha has said: Helping others is helping yourself; helping yourself is helping others. And eventually you see no difference between yourself and others.

SYMPATHETIC JOY

So today I would like to speak about the third quality and the fourth quality: *Mudita*, sympathetic joy, and *Upekkha*, having an equanimous and non-reactive mind.

It is interesting that, as I said, *Karuna* is responding to suffering in whatever way it occurs. *Mudita* is being happy because others are happy. This is sometimes not easy because the opposite of this quality of *Mudita* is jealousy and envy, especially when you see others doing better than yourself. Is it possible for us to really be happy and joyful that others are experiencing happiness and joy?

Another aspect of *Mudita* is making an effort to make others happy. In a way one can relate it to *Karuna* because when you see others suffering you try to do something about it and to get them to experience some joy and lightness, freed from their suffering. Then when that happens you can be extremely happy about it.

Now sympathetic joy or *Mudita* has another interesting aspect, which is learning to rejoice, learning to be happy about your own happiness. Though again this sounds simple, in practice sometimes for some people it is not easy. I know some people who when they experience happiness and joy say: I don't deserve this, I'm such a bad person, I don't deserve to be happy. And I know others who say: How can I feel happy? I feel guilty because there is

such a lot of suffering around me so how can I experience joy? When I experience joy I feel guilty about it. Therefore it is extremely important to learn to develop this quality. To rejoice in your own happiness, to rejoice in your own goodness, to rejoice in seeing more and more the positive in yourself; and when you see more and more the positive in yourself, then you are bound to see more and more the positive in others.

As I said yesterday, every one of you should rejoice right now because you have made a commitment to follow a spiritual path, to be meditators. You should rejoice that you have made a commitment to lead a harmless life, learning not to harm yourself and not to harm others. And you should also rejoice that meditation sometimes, or most of the time, is trying to work with our unpleasant experiences, whether it is physical pain or mental pain. How many people in this world are really prepared to do this? So again to repeat: Shouldn't we rejoice that we have made a commitment, that we are prepared to work with our unpleasant experiences in whatever form they arise? And as I said, trying to learn from them. To ask the question: What can I learn from this?

And I'm very happy to find that some of you have been coming to these talks regularly. So again to rejoice that unless you had this motivation, this interest, you would not be doing that. So rejoice in this strong commitment, the motivation you have to listen to the Dhamma and to practise the Dhamma.

Being hard on ourselves, being critical about ourselves, giving ourselves minuses may come quite naturally for some people. That is why we need to deliberately and consciously cultivate this positive quality of rejoicing in some of the qualities that I mentioned. Sometimes I reflect that we all as human beings have the potentiality to become free. These qualities of freedom are within us. So meditation can be seen as a way of acknowledging this, realising this and allowing these factors of enlightenment to arise in us. So I hope you realise the importance of this beautiful quality, the divine-like quality of *Mudita*, sympathetic joy, in relation to ourselves and others.

EQUANIMITY

The last quality is equanimity, having a non-reactive mind. Again, it is a thing that we have to cultivate, to work at. So when we are meditating, when we are doing formal sitting meditation, to be open to whatever happens in our mind and body. If there are pleasant experiences, if we are having a non-reactive mind, an equanimous mind, we should learn to relate to it without giving it a plus, and holding onto it and wanting it to continue. And when we have an unpleasant experience, whether it is physical pain or mental pain, the immediate reaction is to give it a minus and not to like it, resisting it, disliking it. So having an equanimous mind means, whether it is pleasant or whether it is unpleasant, no plus, no minus, no liking, no disliking - learning to see things just as they are.

As I often emphasise the importance of being human, I would like to suggest that as we are still human there are moments when we like and moments when we dislike - such reactions can still be there. So here again I would suggest that if you are reacting, just to realise that you are reacting and then to find out in your own experience, when you are liking something, when you are holding onto it, how it creates suffering for yourself. And when you are resisting something, when you are disliking something, how it again creates suffering. So from our reactions, from a reactive mind, we can also learn.

When you are reacting, just know that you are reacting, to take that as a learning experience and learn not to react to it. And when you are not reacting just know that you are not

reacting, and see for yourself the results, the benefits of it. So if you can really learn to be open to both the reactive mind and the non-reactive mind and to see the difference between the two, that can be considered something very important.

This, as I said, is how we can try to practise when we are doing formal meditation. Now learning to do this in everyday life as well may be more difficult, but this is the practice. So if you can be observant, if you can be aware in everyday life, you can catch yourself: seeing how in certain situations we like certain things, we want them to continue, we like to give them plusses; and in other situations we don't like them, we want to get rid of them. Just as when doing formal meditation so in everyday life, when you like something, when you identify yourself with something, see for yourself what happens to you, what it does to you.

Then you will realise - and it is a very important discovery that you'll make - that we can't always be demanding how things should be. What we are doing is making demands of ourselves, how we *should* behave, how we *must* behave; making demands of others, how they *should* behave, how they *must* behave; and also demanding from life, how life *should* be, how life *must* be according to our own expectations. Making demands is one thing, but reality is another thing. This is a simple way of seeing how we create our own suffering. So here again, it is very important in everyday life just to see how we create our own suffering with the demands we are making.

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

This brings us to the Buddha's discovery of the Four Noble Truths. In brief, the First Noble Truth is the fact of suffering. And there is no human being who is not familiar with the First Noble Truth. Everyone here, including myself, has experienced the First Noble Truth. Maybe some of you are experiencing it even now.

An interesting question arises: Why is suffering a Noble Truth? What is noble in suffering? It is an interesting, useful question to reflect upon. I suggest that it is noble because if from the suffering you can go on to the Second Noble Truth, then you can find a way out of suffering. So in everyday life when we are suffering, if you can tell yourself: I'm experiencing the First Noble Truth, that is an interesting way of relating to suffering. What happens to most people is that they just stick only in the First Noble Truth, only get to know suffering.

The Second Noble Truth is more difficult because we have to find out how we are creating our own suffering by our likes and our dislikes, by the demands that we are making. I would suggest that this is a very important realisation for us to have because if we can see that we are creating our own suffering, if you have the realisation that only you can free yourself from the suffering that you create yourself, that brings us to the Third Noble Truth and the Fourth Noble Truth.

So if you have any questions about the Four Sublime States I talked about, and also the Four Noble Truths which I briefly mentioned, please ask them. And I must tell you that in the last few days you have been asking very useful, practical questions.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

RETREATANT: *I don't understand the relationship between the Four Sublime States that you have talked about. For example, when you mentioned equanimity you said that we should not distinguish between liking or disliking any outside circumstances, but when you talk about loving-kindness, compassion and sympathetic joy, we have to feel for others, we have to feel for external circumstances, so we have to get involved in what happens outside. So how can you reconcile the three qualities where we have to get involved with what happens outside while the fourth quality is that we should not distinguish?*

GODWIN: Very good question.

I like practical examples. So let's take a simple example where you are walking on the road and you see someone fallen on the road. Then if you have loving-kindness and if you have compassion, there is a need and an urge to respond. Here again there are two very important words: *reacting* and *responding*. So reacting would be getting emotionally involved, having fear, insecurity, you might even start crying. And if there is such a reaction, you will not be able to respond clearly concerning what to do about that person. But with an equanimous mind you learn to do something appropriate about it, just responding without reacting. So this is how the four qualities come together. I hope it's clear.

Anything else?

RETREATANT: *If we deal with the situation as you have just said, then if we go on in this way I feel that we may get cold and very indifferent to what is happening outside. Only handling the situation and not feeling anything. So what is your suggestion?*

GODWIN: Well, this is why my response to the earlier question was that you have to have *Metta* and *Karuna* when you see that the person has fallen on the road. If there is no *Metta* and *Karuna* you'll just see the person fallen on the road and you will just walk by. It's only because of *Metta* and *Karuna* that you feel the need to do something, to act, to show some concern and care for that person. And from that sense of concern and care the response to act just happens. This is what is beautiful when you cultivate these qualities. When there is a need to use them in such situations there is just the response.

RETREATANT: *How can we cultivate these four qualities during meditation?*

GODWIN: Another good, practical question.

This is how it can be done. Now what I suggest sometimes is that we choose one of these four qualities. Maybe today we can do what we did yesterday when the quality I chose then was loving-kindness.

If today one wants to develop *Karuna*, then suppose that when you are sitting there is physical pain, there is suffering in yourself. So rather than continue to suffer as a result of that physical or mental pain, you try to do something about it, you learn to be friendly in relation to it, you learn to let go of it. This would be practising *Karuna* in relation to meditation. And when you do that you can immediately experience sympathetic joy and feel happy: very nice, joy instead of suffering; I tried to do something about the pain and now there is a change taking place. So you can experience joy about it, happiness about it. Then you can experience the last quality, realising maybe I should not hold on to this joy, I should

have a non-reactive mind to the joy. So you see how in one particular situation, a simple situation, one can develop *Metta, Karuna, Mudita, and Upekkha*, all four qualities.

So maybe today when we meditate I might try to offer some guidelines for developing all four aspects.

RETREATANT: *Can I just come back to the big qualities, Metta and Karuna? Are they not the natural reactions, feelings, that one would have when one sees a child fallen down on the road?*

GODWIN: I repeat the same point and take the example of the child. So when you walk along the road, instead of a man you see a child fallen. So it's the same principle, because with a child you can really react, you can even start crying, you can even feel sad: Oh see what has happened to the child! And when you are getting involved like this you will not be in a position to help that poor child. So in the same way as doing something for the man who has fallen, here you would show some concern and then you would do something about it.

This is why I used the two words, please get the two words very clear: reacting and responding. And as I said earlier, if we are reacting emotionally we can learn from that. What made me become so sad? What made me become so depressed? What made me so insecure? Because you might have had the thought: maybe my own child could be like this sometime. So we can create a huge story from that simple incident that you have seen on the road. If that happens, you can reflect on it: Why am I reacting? So that becomes an object of meditation.

And maybe in another situation you might be able to respond. Respond very clearly, very calmly, with a still mind, doing what has to be done. So you see the difference very clearly: Ah, see what happens when I react and see what happens when I respond. Just see the difference.

And the same principle applies to what is happening internally. When we are meditating, someone who is habitually reactive can be reactive to what is happening in meditation also. To take an example, supposing your knees are in pain. You can say my knees are in pain, who knows, my knees might break, I know some meditators who have broken their knees - and you can create a huge story from the pain in the knees. And from the pain in the knees you can have anxiety, you can have fear, you can have insecurity, you can have all these unpleasant emotions. So responding would be just observing the pain and learning to make friends with it, and if it becomes unbearable you change the posture.

Thank you very much for asking questions. Now let's take a small break before meditation. And during the break, please try to continue to move slowly with awareness and also practise silence.

I was very happy to hear some of my friends telling me that they noticed the very peaceful, calm atmosphere here. I was very happy to hear that, so try and maintain that as far as possible.

[Break]

GUIDED MEDITATION ON THE SUBLIME STATES

So let us begin with meditation of loving-kindness, *Metta*.

We will try to radiate, extend lots of friendliness in all directions.

May all beings be well. May all beings be happy. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free of suffering.

Let us now think of the people whom we know are suffering. Maybe physical suffering, maybe mental suffering.

Let us feel for those people who are suffering. Let us feel concern for those people who are suffering.

May they be free of the suffering that they are experiencing.

Can you really wish this from your heart?

Can you now feel happy that you are trying to develop qualities of loving-kindness and compassion for others? Rejoice in this.

Can you be happy with yourself that you are trying to develop these qualities of the heart?

Let us now try to develop the important quality of a non-reactive mind. Whatever is happening in our mind and body right now, can we relate to that without liking, without disliking?

If we are experiencing physical pain, physical discomfort, can we relate to it without reacting?

If your mind is not calm, can you just know that the mind is not calm and not react to it, not give it a minus?

If you are experiencing pleasant experiences, can you not like it; and if you are experiencing unpleasant experiences, can you relate to it without disliking it?

Just being open to whatever is happening.

Learning to see things just as they are.

Let's see how far you can continue to have a non-reactive mind in relation to what is happening in your mind and body.

We will do some nice chanting now.

Before we start to chant, let us create some space in our mind by just feeling the peace and the stillness in this room.

May every one of you here be well, be happy, be peaceful, and be free of suffering.

And when you go to sleep, may you sleep peacefully and wake up peacefully. Thank you.

SKILFUL LIVING

ONE-DAY MEDITATION RETREAT IN CHI LIN NUNNERY, HONG KONG
11TH OCTOBER 1998

MEDITATION IN EVERYDAY LIFE

GODWIN: So I would like to welcome each one of you for this one-day meditation programme.

I would just like to share with you what we will be trying to do today. The first point I want to make is that every one of you should feel very happy because although it's a Sunday, although it's a holiday, you have the motivation to come here and spend the whole day in meditation. Every one of you should rejoice, every one of you should feel very happy about this.

One of the things that we have been emphasising in the talks as a very important aspect in meditation is the practice of awareness, mindfulness. So today we will make a special effort to develop this very important skill of awareness. And related to that, try to have continuity of awareness from moment to moment as far as possible.

So whether you are sitting, standing, walking, eating, doing yoga, whatever you are doing, even going to the toilet, what you do in the toilet, please make an effort just to know, just to be conscious, just to be present, to what is happening in your mind and body from moment to moment.

It is also important to learn to use awareness with friendliness, with gentleness. There is a very interesting Mahayana text in this connection where watching yourself, observing yourself, is compared to being a mother. So like a mother just watching, just observing, just noticing her child in whatever the child is doing, in the same way, if you can watch, if you can observe, if you can find out what is happening in your mind and body with awareness and friendliness, this is extremely important.

Another important aspect of awareness is to experience the present moment, the here and the now. So today let us make an effort to forget whatever has happened in the past. We cannot change the past. It's gone. And then let us not think of the future because the future has not yet come. In a way, thinking of the past and the future is not being with reality. So today we will make a special effort to use awareness, to use friendliness to experience the present moment as far as possible.

A very important area that we need to work with is the area of emotions, especially emotions which we all know like sadness, fear, insecurity, shame, guilt and all these things that create suffering for us in everyday life. These are the things that create suffering for us. So I'll be presenting techniques which will help you to work with these unpleasant emotions.

And it is also important to know, to find out, when these unpleasant emotions are absent. Here again what will be helpful to us is the practice of awareness, because if you know how to be aware then you know what unpleasant emotions you are having. And if there is

awareness you also know when they are not there. I will be presenting one or two tools which will help you to work with these unpleasant emotions.

So it is important to have self-confidence, understanding: when these unpleasant emotions arise I know what to do with them. We need not be afraid of them. I hope today all of you will discover some of these tools and I really hope that you'll develop this self-confidence in yourselves, trust in yourself and trust in the Dhamma. Then you will realise that although problems will arise, suffering will arise, you know what to do with them, you know how to recover from them. This is extremely important.

And whatever we are trying to do today, there'll be a time for group discussions. In the group discussions, please ask questions or share your experience about what is happening here today. This is also very important. So please ask things which have a practical significance concerning what we will be trying to do; only ask questions or present difficulties in relation to that.

So in conclusion, I would like to suggest that you make a real effort to make full use of your time here today. As I said you have made a big sacrifice in coming here on a holiday. So make an effort to make full use of today and get a glimpse, get a taste of what meditation is about, and then have the confidence that through your own efforts you can find a way out of the suffering that you create for yourselves. Thank you very much.

GUIDED SITTING MEDITATION

Let us now begin the programme with sitting meditation.

Let us begin by just feeling friendly towards our mind and body. Friendly and gentle towards our mind, friendly and gentle towards our body.

Can you see yourself as your best friend? And can you really feel it, feel it in every part of your body, your whole being?

And being your best friend, you have complete confidence and trust in yourself.

Now let us just be mindful, just be aware, just be alert and awake to what is happening in our mind and body from moment to moment.

Please realise that what we are doing is not to develop concentration but just learning to be aware, learning to be conscious, learning to be alert. So please don't try to achieve anything. Whatever is happening in your mind and body, just know what is happening.

If you are aware you will know that you are sitting completely still and you will feel the stillness in this room.

Now we will use our awareness to become aware of our breath. So please allow your body to breathe naturally and just be aware of the sensations, the movements you experience in the body, in your breathing.

You know when the body is inhaling. You know when the body is exhaling.

Feel friendly towards your thoughts and just return to your breath.

Experience the present moment with the help of your friend, the breath.

When the breath is long you know that the breath is long. When it is short you know that it is short. When it is deep you know it is deep. When it is not deep you know that it is not deep.

Feeling the stillness in the room, you inhale. Feeling the stillness in the room, you exhale.

If there are unpleasant sensations in the body, just learn to feel friendly and gentle towards them. Don't see them as disturbances or distractions.

We will now end with meditation of loving-kindness.

If there are unpleasant sensations in the body, how far can you make friends with them without disliking them?

If you are experiencing any unpleasant emotions, how far can you feel friendly towards them, not dislike them, not want them to go away?

If you have thoughts that you don't like, how far can you feel friendly towards them and just allow them?

If you are not resisting any of these things, there is no suffering.

[Bell]

GUIDED STANDING MEDITATION

Now please don't think that the meditation is over. Please continue to know from moment to moment what is happening in your mind and body.

We can meditate in four postures: sitting, standing, walking, and lying down. So today we will be exploring three postures: sitting, standing and walking.

Now let us do some standing meditation. And when you stand, please stand up slowly, observing every movement while you are standing up and observing the intention to stand. And please learn to stand up slowly so that you will not be disturbing persons around you.

Now just feel what it is to stand. Feel the different sensations, the different movements in your body when you are standing.

So when thoughts come, gently let go of them and come back to the body, the sensations.

Experience the present moment with the help of your body.

Note carefully, sharply, how sensations in the body change from moment to moment.

Feel what it is to stand with your body completely still.

And can you feel the stillness around you?

Not thinking about the past, not thinking about the future.

Experiencing the present moment with the help of the sensations and stillness.

Whatever you experience in the body, just see them as just sensations, sensations arising, sensations passing away from moment to moment.

[Bell]

GUIDED WALKING MEDITATION

Let us now explore walking meditation.

Please be aware of all the movements in your body while you are walking. Again experiencing the present moment with the help of walking, conscious walking.

Feel the different sensations, the movements in your body while you are walking.

Let go of your thoughts gently and come back to walking.

Just enjoying conscious walking.

Please don't look around. Please look at the feet of the person in front.

Can you walk as if you are walking on lotus flowers, being conscious of each step that you are taking?

Can you feel the sensations in your knees? Do you feel the sensation of your feet touching the floor?

Now please try to slow down the walking so that you can be really conscious of each step that you are taking from moment to moment.

Let go of your thoughts gently and come back to walking.

Now stand still wherever you are and please close your eyes.

We will now do sitting meditation for a short while before yoga. So please walk slowly with moment to moment awareness to where you were originally seated. Continuity of awareness from walking to sitting is very important; please have moment to moment awareness and then we will have a short period of sitting practice.

This is going to be a very short sitting, so we'll try to sit with a mind that is really alert and awake from moment to moment. And as it is a short sitting, please learn to sit without moving.

[Bell]

Thank you. Thank you very much. I think it was a really peaceful sitting.

[Yoga]

DISCUSSION WITH THE FIRST GROUP

GODWIN: We can discuss what we have been trying to do today. So we will go over some of the things we did today, and then if you have any questions you can present them.

So the first technique we practised was just being aware of whatever was happening. Does anyone have any question in relation to this?

RETREATANT: *When I practised walking and standing meditation I was able to be aware of the sensations and what happened at the time, but when I practised sitting this morning I had many passing thoughts and I was carried away by these passing thoughts. So later in this afternoon if we are going to have sitting again, then if I am again carried away by the passing thoughts can I do standing meditation instead of sitting, or what other suggestion would you give to me?*

GODWIN: Yes. Very clear question. The technique I presented is something very simple, just to observe the passing thoughts. Just know very clearly, very sharply, what thoughts are arising from moment to moment. So having passing thoughts should not be a problem when we have this awareness of whatever is happening.

Anything else about this technique?

RETREATANT: *Thank you for your teaching. Now I know that my suffering comes from my expectations, but this is my habitual pattern, this is my bad habit. How can I stop this bad habit from coming back again? That is the first question. The second part is, should I deal with this situation with sympathetic joy or with equanimity? And the third part of the question is, if I deal with it with equanimity, would there be another expectation of what I have to do?*

GODWIN: Well, it is quite right to say that suffering is created by our expectations and that it is a strong habit in ourselves, and this is where awareness is very important. So with awareness you catch yourself immediately when your habit patterns arise. And then realise that it is just a habit and that it is not reality. So to repeat the instructions, it is being aware and catching the habit when it arises, in whatever form, and then learning to let go of it, aware that it is just a habit, nothing else. If you can catch it as it arises it will be great because then you'll be really handling it effectively. As I often say, as we are human sometimes we might fail to catch it as it arises and we might become victims of this habit. So when that happens again just reflect on what has happened when the event is over, and then learn from what has happened. Learn to experiment with such situations.

And the best technique to work with this is, of course, awareness and equanimity as you have pointed out. Learning to have a non-reactive mind to whatever is happening. If having a non-reactive mind is another expectation you should realise: I'm trying to be non-reactive and sometimes I might succeed, but sometimes I might fail. If you can have that openness there is very little likelihood of it becoming a strong expectation.

I'm very happy that you have made a very important discovery, and I would like to say that having made this discovery, I'm sure you will have confidence in it, and make more and more discoveries, and I feel that eventually you will succeed in working with this habit pattern.

Another thing that we were doing was focusing on breathing. Now does anyone have any question, difficulties about that technique?

RETREATANT: *Normally when I walk in the streets there is no problem, it is very natural, but when I tried to practise walking meditation and to place the mindfulness on the feet, then I find that my walking becomes unstable.*

GODWIN: Actually my question was about focusing on breathing, whether there are any questions about that, but it is alright that you asked a question about walking meditation. I will try to respond to that.

It is a very interesting point that you are making, because in meditation we have to do things naturally. This is why in the meditation on breathing one has to learn to breathe naturally. In the same way, when doing walking meditation we slow down, but in slowing down one is learning to walk naturally. Whether it is breathing or walking meditation, if you try to do it differently and not naturally, then you have problems.

A very interesting point that arises from that question is that when we are meditating we feel that we should do something different, something special. If you try to do anything as if it is something special, as if it is something different, then there'll be special problems. So please realise meditation is not something special. It is something very natural. It was so beautiful when I had a session with a group of children: so natural, simple and uncomplicated.

Anything else?

RETREATANT: *I usually meditate at night at about 1:00 a.m. and I find that when I breathe my eyes appeared to be pulled inwards. When I meditate during the daytime there is no such problem. So I would like to know whether there is a difference between meditating at night and meditating in the daytime.*

GODWIN: It depends. If you are getting up at 1:00 a.m. I feel that maybe you are trying too hard. I am very happy that you are so motivated to start meditating at 1:00, a big plus to you! But I would like to suggest that you try to meditate between 3:00 and 4:00 in the morning, or between 3:30 and 4:30 and maybe the problems that you were describing will not happen then. In most meditation centres in Sri Lanka, we get up around 3:30, 4:00, or 4:30. And I think it is very important that we should get enough sleep, of course depending on the individual.

There is time for one more question.

RETREATANT: *When we meditate and focus on the breathing, sometimes we may find that the air around is polluted. For example, when somebody is cooking nearby and there are smells the focusing would be disturbed by the smells or polluted air. So what should we do under those circumstances? Should we stop meditating or what?*

GODWIN: No, I would suggest you continue with the meditation, because it might be difficult to find a place where there is no pollution. And the problem is not with the smell of food but the problem is with ourselves. If we can find ideal places where there is nice air, where there is no smell of food, that is very good. But does that mean that we should not meditate in places where there is smell of food and not very pure air?

So in relation to the smell of food, when you get the smell of food, what you can observe is what are the thoughts that you have in relation to the smell of food. It will be a very good insight when you get the smell of food but it is only smelling and there is no reaction to the smell that you are getting. So if that happens you have a very important insight, a glimpse, that the problem is not with what is happening externally but what is happening inside us.

What is beautiful about meditation is that the so-called distractions and disturbances become our teachers. Rather than waste such situations we should learn to see how far even

under those circumstances we can meditate, and this will give us lots of self-confidence, and will be a very important breakthrough.

And if we meditate in a place where there is pure air, where there is no smell of food, do we think there won't be any problems for us? Then we might have other problems!

Thank you very much for the useful questions that have been asked. What struck me was all the questions were asked by ladies. I hope the men do not have any problems!

DISCUSSION WITH THE SECOND GROUP

GODWIN: Do you have any questions about what we have been trying to do today?

RETREATANT: *When we sit, is there a posture which we must stick to?*

GODWIN: I would say the ideal posture would be the cross-legged posture, but even in the cross-legged posture there are variations, like the lotus posture is one type of posture; half-lotus is another. But with whatever posture you choose, it is important is to have your spine erect, because when you have your spine erect it is very easy to become alert and awake and really be conscious. So this is where sometimes yoga exercises can help you to work with your posture. In the afternoon session, if you have any problems or difficulties with the sitting posture, please ask the yoga master and he will help you with the sitting posture. And here again what is important is to have a posture where you can feel relaxed. This is very important. To be mentally and physically relaxed when you meditate is extremely important.

Anything else?

RETREATANT: *Can you kindly repeat what you have said about focusing on the breathing, because I was not here on the night that you were talking about focusing on breathing.*

GODWIN: Very briefly: first it is allowing the body to breathe naturally, and then to be aware of the sensations you feel within the area of the nostrils and other parts of the body when the body is breathing. And it is just simple, using the in-breath and the out-breath to develop awareness and to be in the present moment.

RETREATANT: *When I meditate and after I have completely relaxed I find my eyes usually become moist and tears flow out. I would like to know what is happening in that situation.*

GODWIN: I'm happy to hear that you feel relaxed when you meditate. And then when you are relaxed if something is happening in the eyes, just know that it is happening. When we meditate we really don't know what is going to happen in our mind and body. So many different things can happen in our mind and body. And if you ask the question: Why is this happening to me? Is it the right thing or the wrong thing? then if it is right or if it is wrong, it creates more problems and it creates more suffering. So meditation is something very, very simple. Whatever is happening, you just observe, you just know, and then continue meditating and then something else is bound to happen.

RETREATANT: *I would like to ask questions about the Four Sublime States, not about meditation. I work in a coroner's court as a clerk, and whenever I read reports on the cases, in each case there is a deceased person. He or she may have been killed in an accident or he or she might have committed suicide. Whatever the cause of death, when I read the reports I have to write down his or her age, occupation, address, and the reason for death, etc. and there is a code for each age, occupation, and so*

on. When I do this, I found that no matter whether a person is young or old, man or woman, there is a lot of suffering and it is because of these sufferings that they have committed suicide or because of some negligence that they have been involved in accidents.

So whenever I write in the file, I feel pain in my heart, and sometimes what I do is to do some reciting like "Namo Tassa..." and then the pain may become a little bit less. I also found that my mind expands on the situation, thinking that the person who has committed suicide must have suffered a lot before committing the act and even afterwards in his next life he may have to go to a place where he has to continue with the suffering, so I become very unhappy. I would like to know how to handle this situation. Should I try to lessen the pain or should I just allow the pain to go on?

GODWIN: I'll give a simple suggestion. You can think of the person, doesn't matter how old, how young, whatever the circumstances and then think of that person wherever that person may be: May he or she be well, may he or she be happy, may he or she be peaceful, may he or she be free of suffering. So in place of the pain, in place of the grief, instead of suffering you will be developing loving-kindness for that person. It will be good for you and it will be good for that person.

RETREATANT: *Most of the time when I meditate I find that it is very difficult to relax because there are many passing thoughts. So what is your suggestion?*

GODWIN: What is wrong with passing thoughts? There is nothing wrong with passing thoughts. Or do you think that you should not be having passing thoughts? Then you get upset and you cannot relax. Today I repeatedly mentioned, please make friends with your thoughts, please make friends with your emotions, please make friends with your sensations. I can't understand why meditators hate their passing thoughts! Poor thoughts!

When we don't meditate passing thoughts are no problem, but when we are meditating we want to have no passing thoughts! So when you're not meditating, even though there are passing thoughts you feel very relaxed; but when you're meditating you can't relax because of the passing thoughts! Aren't we funny? See what we are doing in the name of meditation. Please see this very clearly.

RETREATANT: *Previously I have practised some other kind of breathing where my breathing is not natural. Now I would like to practise natural breathing but I find that because of this change in my breathing pattern during the sitting, my body becomes stiff and even my skin is affected. I would like you to give some suggestions as to what I should do.*

GODWIN: Now when you are seated in this posture I'm sure you're breathing. Is that creating a problem? No. So when you sit in meditation also there is nothing special. Most of these questions are very interesting for me, in that when you meditate you see it as something different, something special. There is a meditation master in Sri Lanka who says that when you sit, if you aim for something special you will have special problems!

Please realise that meditation is a way of living. Please realise that meditation is not only when you are sitting. As I said, whether it is sitting, standing, walking, lying down, in any situation one has to practise the meditation of just being aware. Then meditation becomes natural, then meditation becomes part of us, then all these questions about what happens in sitting may not arise.

I think we have time for one last question.

RETREATANT: *The first question is that when I was younger I was able to sit cross-legged but now I am much older I cannot sit cross-legged. So I would like to ask whether I can meditate in the posture in which I am now sitting. The second question is that I practise visualisation and I visualise some deity or Bodhisatta, and there was a night when I saw a deity coming down from the sky. I would like to ask whether this phenomenon is O.K. or not.*

GODWIN: First question. You are looking very beautiful, very peaceful when you are sitting on the chair.

RETREATANT: *So when I sit like this, can my feet touch the ground?*

GODWIN: The way you are sitting now is perfect.

RETREATANT: *I am now 91 years old.*

GODWIN: I'm very impressed and inspired that at 91 you could be sitting so beautifully on the chair and that you could so clearly ask these questions.

About the second question, I am very sorry, I have not practised visualisation meditation. I'm sure you must have a teacher who is teaching you about visualisation, so I think you should ask the question from your teacher. I'm very sorry.

RETREATANT: *The teacher who taught me visualisation has passed away.*

GODWIN: Then I will try to offer some suggestions. So when you visualise, when you have pleasant visualisations or even when you have unpleasant visualisations, just try to have a mind that is equanimous in both situations. And I am sure you will be able to do that.

Thank you very much.

DISCUSSION WITH THE THIRD GROUP

GODWIN: Are there any questions?

RETREATANT: *When I have negative feelings and thoughts while I sit in meditation, how can I be friends with them and deal with them?*

GODWIN: One suggestion is to please see it as an opportunity, as a learning experience, because it is extremely important and valuable for us to learn about unpleasant emotions.

The second suggestion is, as I have been saying this morning, how far can we make friends with them, how far can we say I don't feel O.K. but it is O.K. not to feel O.K.?

And the third suggestion is to try to find out, try to learn what exactly is negative, unpleasant about it. Is it a thought, is it a sensation, is it an emotion? Trying really to look deeply into what you consider to be negativity.

Another tool is to think of our friend the breath at that time. Or as we did this morning while standing, just become conscious of the sensations in the body. Just being with the breath, just being with the sensations; and then if we can just be with the breath and with the sensations we might have fewer thoughts and this will help us to really create space around the unpleasant emotion we are experiencing.

The next tool is to realise that whatever arises passes away. What is funny is that if we have an unpleasant emotion, if we tell the unpleasant emotion: don't leave me, don't go, what will happen? it won't stay. Or even if we say: stay with me, it will change. So we have no control. These things arise, these things pass away. So just to be open to that important aspect of what the Buddha taught.

Another very important point is that when these unpleasant emotions are not there, just to know that they are not there. Because everything is changing, sometimes we have pleasant emotions, sometimes we have unpleasant emotions. We won't be having all pleasant emotions nor will we be having all unpleasant emotions. So to be open to both and know when they are there and when they are not there.

And the last tool is to realise that these are visitors that come to our mind. So you must be a very good host, and let these visitors come and let these visitors go. So when visitors come, as a good host you must say: Hello, welcome. Make friends with them and talk to them. Why have you come? What can I learn from you? And when they leave, say: Goodbye. Come back again later!

So in this way we can learn to play with their coming and going. Then rather than see them as problems, you see them as very interesting situations, challenges, working with these interesting visitors we have. And there is a very deep Buddhist insight which understands that these visitors do not belong to us. The problem arises when we think they belong to us and say, this is *my* sadness, this is *my* anxiety. So I hope you will wait for these visitors to come and then learn to use some of these tools. Then you can develop lots of self-confidence, and when they arise you know what to do.

Anything else?

RETREATANT: *I want to share some experience on how to make friends with unpleasant experiences.*

GODWIN: Please do so.

RETREATANT: *At the beginning I think it may be difficult for us to welcome unpleasant experiences. When they come we will not like them, but I think reflection is very important. After the unpleasant experience has gone, we can reflect on the situation and gradually we will discover that we can really learn a lot from unpleasant experiences and that they are really our great teachers. Then gradually we will even welcome unpleasant experiences. So I think reflection is very important.*

GODWIN: So I hope that those who have problems with unpleasant emotions will have the experience of learning to make friends with their emotions.

RETREATANT: *When I meditate it's not necessarily the case that there are unpleasant or pleasant sensations. Sometimes there are practical questions which arise which need to be answered. For example, in daily life there are things which we need to handle. As you said, we should respond to them but not react. So when those questions arise, should we think about the solution during the meditation? Because it is very natural that when such questions arise we need to think how to handle them. So can we think whilst we meditate?*

GODWIN: Yes, a useful question. So this brings up an important technique in meditation which is called reflection.

Reflection is using thoughts in a very creative way. Usually we use thoughts destructively to create our own suffering, but here when you use thought creatively you're using it to work

with the suffering, all kinds of suffering. So what is important is that with a mind that is calm, with a mind that is clear, you start to reflect on the problem you are having. And a very interesting exercise is to see that problem, to see that situation, from different angles. Usually we see only one or two aspects of the problem, but when we reflect in this way we can see so many areas, so many aspects of this problem that we are reflecting on. So this in itself becomes a meditation, and from this a solution to the problem may arise in this kind of meditative reflection.

RETREATANT: *Master, when we practise having a non-reactive mind and we have a negative feeling arise, we try to overcome this negative involvement, for example, worries or negative emotions. Won't we then become like a piece of wood, or lose interest in life or lose the ambition to succeed? Is there a problem here?*

GODWIN: In relation to unpleasant emotions, I offered many tools. So when I offered the tools I never spoke about a non-reactive mind. Working with unpleasant emotions you should not have the idea that you will have a non-reactive mind. In which case I should have just said there is only one tool, a non-reactive mind. I didn't say that.

In Sri Lanka, people who suffer from grief because they have lost a son in the war, or something similar, I can't tell them: Just have a non-reactive mind. It doesn't work. So I tell them that it is natural that you have grief. We all have grief in us, it is quite natural. And then I would try to work with them, using the different tools that I mentioned.

I think maybe the problem with the question is with the phrase, non-reaction; you feel that you do not need to take any action. Is that the problem you have? Is that what is worrying you?

RETREATANT: *No. If we are non-reactive to things, to outside circumstances there may be a danger that we would have no feelings, and as a result, not be interested in anything else.*

GODWIN: Yesterday, and for a couple of days I have been speaking about *Metta*, *Karuna*, *Mudita*, and *Upekkha*. And I said that they are really making an effort to open our heart because they are all qualities of the heart. So firstly when you have *Metta* you learn to open your heart to yourself, feeling for yourself. Then when you have *Metta* for others, you really open your heart to others. So you're relating to others with warmth. And the second quality that I mentioned was *Karuna* which means really feeling for the suffering of others. Really feeling concern and care for others. So if you do not have feelings, you cannot care and have concern for others. And in the same way, if you do not care for yourself then you don't have *Karuna* for yourself.

Also I have been emphasising so much the importance of joy and lightness. And joy and lightness are nothing but aspects of the heart, feelings. As for a non-reactive mind, maybe I could use a different phrase, that is: to be cool, but without being cold. So I would like to tell my friend not to use the word "non-reactive" but to use the words "cool but not cold". Is it clear now?

RETREATANT: *Can you give us some idea how to try to maintain joy and compassion and warmth towards people you see day in and day out who are negative. I find it very difficult. I get swallowed up in their negativity after a while, and I can't help them and then I can't help myself.*

GODWIN: Although it is time for yoga, I will still respond to that question because it is a very important question. Because I think everyone here can relate to that question. In everyday

life sometimes we are forced to deal with people whom we consider to be negative, maybe starting with your husband or wife, or more probably the boss. So what do we do when we have to relate to such people? Fortunately or unfortunately, we can't avoid them, so we can't escape from them. Then what do we do? I will give some suggestions.

First suggestion is, don't be surprised. Why? Because they are unenlightened beings just like yourself. So it is very important to realise that we are living in a world which is full of imperfect human beings, including ourselves. Putting it in stronger language, according to the Buddha until we are enlightened we are all crazy. We are crazy in the sense that no-one can claim that they can always see things just as they are. We all see things subjectively, not objectively. In this sense we are all crazy, and so we are living in a crazy world. So when you see imperfections in everyday life, whether arising in yourself or in others, please don't be surprised.

The second suggestion is that when you see imperfection in others, try to remind yourself: I am also imperfect like that person. Otherwise we have a self-righteous attitude: I am perfect, the other person is imperfect. I am positive, the other person is negative. Is there anyone here who is always positive? Are you always positive? So just to realise: Now the other person is negative, so I can also sometimes behave like that. Then you become more and more humble.

The third suggestion is to try to see them as your *gurus*, as your teachers, as your masters. I would like to mention now that I have been called a master but I would like to see myself as a spiritual friend and not as a master. But when you see negative people, please see them as masters. Why? Because the master is showing you a mirror. So what to do when you are getting angry? Use the mirror and look at your face reflected in the mirror. Whichever way the master is behaving, look at your own emotions. What are the emotions that are coming? I'm giving that person a minus. See I'm getting angry, I'm getting annoyed, I'm getting agitated. See all the emotions that are arising thanks to the master. The function of a good master is to try to test whether you are good meditators. So this master is testing you whether you are a good meditator.

And then one thing that is very difficult but very interesting to do is: can you see the master as if for the first time? Sometimes we come to a conclusion that this person is a negative person. So everytime we see that person we relate to him with that conclusion, with that prejudice, with that bias. Sometimes we see what we want to see. So poor master, even if the poor master is behaving in a positive way we think how negative that person is: see the way that person is looking at me! Because we only see what we want to see.

And the last suggestion is to ask the master what are the negative things you can see in me? That will be very revealing. Thank you very much. Enjoy the yoga.

[Yoga]

GUIDED MEDITATION ON THOUGHTS

GODWIN: So we will now try to meditate on our thoughts, because in the discussion there were people who were having difficulties with thoughts. So let us learn to meditate on thoughts.

So just learning to observe, just learning to watch the thoughts that arise and the thoughts that pass away in our mind.

Let us learn to make friends with our thoughts. To observe them very sharply, very clearly.

Let us see how far we can observe the thoughts without judging them. No plus, no minus. Just letting thoughts come and letting thoughts go again.

If you are judging the thoughts, just know that you are judging them. And see the difference when you are judging and when you are not judging the thoughts.

If some of you are having difficulties with unpleasant emotions, can you allow them to arise now if there is a need for them to arise. Sadness, fear, anxiety, depression, whatever you don't like, let them arise now.

If there are no such unpleasant emotions, just to know that they are not there, and if they are there, just to know that they are there and then to make friends with them.

[Bell]

MEDITATION IN DAILY LIFE

So I will offer some suggestions on how to integrate meditation with daily life.

One can see meditation as a medicine for the sickness that we create ourselves. The first point to be very clear about in your mind is: are you really interested in taking the medicine? Have you really made a commitment to take the medicine? Because if you have really made a commitment to take the medicine, you can never say I forgot to take the medicine or I have no time to take the medicine. You all have different priorities in life, but where does this taking the medicine figure in your list of priorities? This is a very important point to be clear about. This is the first point I would like to make.

The second point is that we have been emphasising the importance of just knowing, just being aware, just finding out what is happening to us especially in our daily life. So one has to make an effort, a sincere effort during the day to try to be aware, to try to be conscious of what is happening to you. Maybe a good time to do this is in the morning.

Now just as you wake up in the morning - you may have lots of things to do - but just as you wake up can you spend a few minutes meditating, even while lying down on your bed. I mean, it would be ideal if you could do some sitting meditation in the morning even for a short time, but let us assume that you are too busy. But at least while still lying down spend 5 minutes in the lying-down posture and start the day with loving-kindness meditation, just feeling friendly towards yourself and maybe radiating thoughts of loving-kindness. And it is useful to make a wish: During the day may I get an opportunity to practise loving-kindness, *Karuna*, *Mudita* and the other things that we have been discussing. So this is a beautiful way to begin the day. It won't take more than 5 or 10 minutes.

Then there are certain things that we have to do in the morning. However busy you are, I think everyone will brush their teeth in the morning. No one will say I don't have time to brush my teeth. Now here again, can we just practise a little awareness, mindfulness when we are brushing our teeth, just as an example? What happens when we brush our teeth? Again, we have thoughts. We hardly know we are brushing our teeth. This becomes a very strong habit in us. As it is a strong habit, thoughts will come. So with awareness, knowing thoughts are arising, knowing thoughts are coming, just learn to let go of the thoughts and come back to brushing, the conscious brushing of your teeth.

However much you are busy, you are bound to go to the toilet. It is interesting that in the main text in which the Buddha described how we should develop awareness, it says that when you are in the toilet, try to be aware, try to be conscious of what is happening while you are in the toilet. I call this toilet meditation! If you are really interested, if you are really motivated, if you really want to take the medicine, even if you are so busy at least you will have time to do toilet meditation.

Then I think you will definitely be having breakfast. I won't be telling you to eat breakfast in silence because it is not possible. But at least spend one minute before you start eating breakfast feeling grateful. Maybe someone has prepared the breakfast for you. It is beautiful to feel grateful for that person. Or even if you have prepared breakfast yourself, just feel grateful that today I prepared breakfast myself and now I'm eating my breakfast. Just to develop this quality of feeling grateful. This is a very important aspect, a very important spiritual quality.

Then to make an effort while eating your breakfast, at least occasionally, to come back to awareness, just to come back to tasting, just to come back to chewing and swallowing. Just make an effort to do that.

Then what happens? Maybe you have to go to work. Now work is a very interesting place, with many interesting challenges. A very important aspect in the place of work, and also in everyday life, is the problem of relationships. How to relate to the people around you. Because as I said, we live in an imperfect human world. So all the time we have to encounter, we have to have relationships with imperfect human beings. What we can try to do, as I suggested earlier, is to try to learn from them.

The importance of meditation, the importance of awareness, is trying to watch your own mind when relating to others. And it is natural that you sometimes have unpleasant emotions in relating to people, so don't be surprised. This is the importance of awareness. This is the importance of watching. This is the importance of learning. And then to see how we can work with these emotions, how we can understand them, how we can let go of them.

Supposing at some time we are unable to do that and we get angry, we get annoyed, we show our anger, we express our anger. What happens when we do this? Again, please don't be surprised. Please learn not to give yourself a minus. This is very important. If you do not have the time then, when you go back home, or when you have a little space, what you can do is reflect on what really happened. As I said earlier this reflection, this exploration, has to be done in a very friendly, gentle way and not in a harsh, hard way, being extremely critical of yourself and seeing yourself as a failure.

So this would be a very creative way of living, where we really learn from our mistakes. Our mistakes become an area for our spiritual growth. I would like to suggest that rather than give yourself a minus, please give yourself a plus. You deserve a big plus because you are learning from them, you are trying to use them as part of your spiritual growth. So shouldn't we rejoice for this learning and growing and our efforts to do this? Feel grateful for such an opportunity.

This does not mean allowing others to do whatever they like, allowing yourself to be exploited. Sometimes, in certain situations, we need to be assertive, we need to be firm because some people only understand that language. So here again you very deliberately, consciously decide: now I'm going to be very firm, I'm going to be assertive in relation to this person. You do it with complete awareness. I know some meditation teachers, some

meditation masters who pretend they are getting angry with their students in order to awaken their students. So it can be used as a tool, it can be used as a device.

And I also would like to suggest that during the day, especially if you are very busy, just try to take very brief breaks to spend some time with yourself. You don't have to leave the place of work and you can still be seated on your chair and you can even have your eyes open so no one really knows what is happening. And then please spend some time with your friend, the breath. Even for 5 minutes, it will create space in your mind. Even for 5 minutes, whatever the build-up that is happening in your office, or whatever you are doing, there can be some recovery and some space and this will really help you. And of course you have the freedom when in the office also to do some toilet meditation where you can be completely alone, secluded.

So during the day, whatever emotions arise, whatever states of mind arise - and they are bound to arise in a place where it is busy and so on - what we have to do is to make them the objects of meditation.

And when you go back home maybe you'll be too tired to meditate, so at least spend 10 minutes, maybe not in the cross-legged posture but just lying down or seated on a chair, and just reflect on how you spent the day. Try to do this reflection in a very friendly, gentle way: Now how did I spend the day today? What were the times when I had unpleasant emotions? What were the times when they were not there? This is equally important. Sometimes you might be surprised that for the whole day you were angry only once. So this can really help you to understand, to discover about yourself, about how you are relating to yourself, how you are relating to others. And this can naturally bring about a transformation in oneself.

Maybe another point related to this is, as I have indicated earlier - it's a really powerful, very practical, direct practice - is to see the Four Noble Truths in everyday life. It would be really excellent, it would be wonderful if when you are suffering during the day you could remind yourself, here I am experiencing the Buddha's First Noble Truth. If you can tell yourself this, if you can remind yourself of it you'll see you'll be relating to that suffering in an entirely different way.

And then you can really move from that to the Second Noble Truth: Now let me see, in what way am I creating my own suffering? And then you can use the Third Noble Truth and the Fourth Noble Truth in the same way. During the day just find out when you are free, when there is no suffering, and then explore: Now there is no suffering; what is the reason why there is no suffering? So if you can really learn to use the Four Noble Truths in daily life in this practical, simple, direct way, you'll be living the Buddha's teaching whether you are suffering or whether you are not suffering. Isn't that a beautiful way to live?

SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP

Maybe a few more practical suggestions. In the Buddha's teaching spiritual friends are very much emphasised. You are very fortunate here that you have many groups doing meditation. So it is good to join one such group and it is good to cultivate friendships with spiritual and noble friends.

Spiritual friendship is learning to grow together. I was speaking about relationships earlier. In the relationships you have with different people, if you can also see them as spiritual

friends, again it is a very positive way of relating to others. Anyway, if there are meditation groups around, please join one of them.

Another helpful suggestion is to read about the Buddha's teaching. So here again there are some very valuable books that have been translated and I think some of them are already distributed here. So it is good to read them and good to reflect on them. This can really inspire us and can also be an incentive for us to practise, and this would be reminding ourselves of the importance of taking the medicine.

I would like to pause now and if you have any questions please ask them. I feel the kind of question that might be more valuable is if you can present me with your difficulties and say: Now in this situation, how can a meditator respond? So if you have such situations, such difficulties in your everyday life, we might be able to discuss such situations.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

RETREATANT: *Master, I would like to ask if when we are sick and we are suffering from great pain or other things, can we still practise meditation? because I think at that time we are not in a fit state of mind.*

GODWIN: So if I understood the question correctly, it means there are certain situations where we are really overwhelmed by emotions, where there is lot of suffering and it is not possible to think of meditation at that time.

So what I would suggest is that you can wait until you recover from that state of mind. It does not matter how long it takes. And then, as I suggested earlier, you can look back, you can reflect: Now what really happened to me? What really made me go through that physical and mental suffering? What can I learn from that experience? And maybe this is the importance of spiritual friends: maybe at that moment, if you have a spiritual friend, it is something very wholesome, very skilful, just to share your suffering with another person. This is how we help each other.

Any other question?

RETREATANT: *I occasionally join talks on Buddhism like this one and I sit and meditate occasionally. There was an experience when I was sitting, I felt that some force or very strong sensation rose in my abdomen up towards my heart and it made me very uncomfortable. And then emotion arose and I cried. Can you comment on this phenomenon?*

GODWIN: As I said this morning, when we meditate we really don't know what is going to happen. As with you, the most unexpected things can happen. So when such things happen, please don't be surprised, and please don't blame yourself. Please don't give that experience a big minus. As I said this morning, please don't try to analyse it. Sometimes we cannot understand it intellectually. So what we can do is just to know it. This is the beauty of awareness. This is why the Buddha said this is the only way. Just to realise this is what is happening to me, and just to be with it. And as I said, if it is very unpleasant you can say: I don't really feel O.K. but it's O.K. not to feel O.K. Just really feel it, just really say this.

And the last point, and I consider it as a very important point, is that meditation is also learning to work with unpleasant experiences. Please realise that meditation does not mean having only positive experiences, pleasant experiences, experiences we are happy with. So I would like to repeat that unpleasant experiences are extremely valuable, extremely useful, if

you can really learn from them, if you can see them as objects for meditation rather than seeing them as something strange, unusual and so on. So please make such experiences the objects of meditation.

Sometimes I consider such unpleasant experiences more valuable than so-called pleasant experiences. There are no problems with pleasant experiences. In that sense, such unpleasant experiences are valuable because you learn to handle them when they arise. And this is exactly what happens in life. Suddenly we find ourselves with an unexpected situation in life: same principle. So you see the importance of learning to handle such situations when you are meditating so that if such events were to arise externally you learn to do the same. This is why in the Dhamma it is said you should meditate internally and externally: same principle, same solution.

RETREATANT: *I was told by somebody that it is very important for us to choose the right type of meditation. May I ask, are there any schools of meditation which are evil and others which are not evil, and how can we distinguish these types of schools? And what are the criteria for us to choose the right master?*

GODWIN: I would like to quote a very inspiring text from the Buddha. The Buddha was asked the same question. There are many teachers, there are many methods, we are confused. Please help us, Buddha. The Buddha said: Please do not accept anything just because it is said in the traditions. Please do not accept anything just because it is written down in the scriptures. Please do not accept anything just because it sounds logical and reasonable. This is the important point: Don't even accept when a teacher says something. So please don't just accept what I am saying also!

The Buddha said only when you see for yourself from your own experience what is creating suffering, what is creating happiness, that is the right way for you to practise. So the real teacher is your own experience. To see whether the medicine is working or whether the medicine is not working. So you have to see it for yourself. I am so amazed and I am so inspired by this very radical teaching of the Buddha.

RETREATANT: *Can meditation cure insomnia?*

GODWIN: I work with people who suffer from insomnia. It is interesting that in the teaching on loving-kindness the Buddha speaks of eleven benefits of meditation on loving-kindness and three of them are related to sleep. So with loving-kindness you sleep peacefully, you wake up peacefully, and you don't have unpleasant dreams, nightmares and so on. So when I meet people who suffer from insomnia what I tell them is, before they fall asleep to try to practise loving-kindness, and I have found that this generally helps in working with insomnia.

RETREATANT: *If we go to sleep very late, we feel very tired mentally and when we meditate we feel like going to sleep most of the time. In that situation when the tiredness is so overwhelming, is it right that we should not force ourselves to continue with the sitting and should just go to sleep?*

GODWIN: What I would suggest is that when you wake up and you find that you have not had enough sleep and yet you really want to meditate, what can be attempted is not to do sitting meditation straight away, but maybe do walking meditation or yoga. This is the importance of yoga, some physical exercises where you try to wake up physically and mentally with such exercises.

And maybe another suggestion is to take a very cold shower. This will also help you to wake up physically and mentally. And then try to sit with your eyes open.

These suggestions may help you, hopefully.

Now it's time for chanting and loving-kindness meditation. So before we start to chant, let us create some space in our minds. A few minutes of just feeling the peace, listening to the sounds.

[Chanting]

THANKS

May I thank everyone of you for showing such interest and motivation in the practice. It has been something very inspiring and impressive for me.

I would also like to thank the excellent organisation. By Sri Lankan standards it was very efficient and excellent, quite wonderful.

And I would also like to thank the teacher who taught us yoga.

In conclusion I would like to thank the wonderful nuns here and those who have taken care of me during my stay. I was really touched and moved by the generosity, kindness, and friendliness which they showed to me.

And I would like to express my deep appreciation to the three interpreters. I'm sure they must have improved on what I said! One of the visitors to the nunnery, who is well-placed in the education department, said she was so impressed with the three interpreters she wanted to get more details about them!

And in conclusion, I hope that everyone, with lots of concern and care, will continue to take the medicine and then through taking that medicine find a way out of the suffering that we have created for ourselves.

LIVING WITH AWARENESS

RETREAT TALKS IN FA YIM KOK, LANTAU ISLAND, HONG KONG
15TH - 21ST OCTOBER 1998

DAY 1: AWARENESS AND EFFORT

GODWIN: I'm very happy to say that I'm impressed and inspired by the atmosphere here, seeing that this is the first day of the retreat. There's a beautiful feeling of peace when we are sitting here. And I can see that you are also making an effort to continue the practice of awareness when you leave the room. Usually when we eat there is much talk, but today there's been only a few words spoken, and that in relation to some practical matters. Being the first day this really surprises me, but also I'm very happy about it. So as you are making an effort to practise awareness, I will offer some suggestions on how you can sustain it.

The first is, as some of you are already doing, you can sustain awareness just by slowing down. As you know, when we move in a very fast vehicle we are not able to notice the things that are around us. If you want to see your surroundings very sharply, very clearly, then the vehicle has to go very slowly. So it's only when we can really slow down that we can see very sharply, very clearly, what is happening in our mind and body from moment to moment. In the same way, we can notice external things very sharply and clearly.

Related to this, one thing which we can discover with more and more awareness and slowing down is the intention that arises before doing something. We do things so quickly, so fast, that we hardly catch ourselves intending to do it. And with more and more observing the intention, you will realise that there is more and more awareness, so there is a connection between observing the intention and the practice of awareness.

And catching our intention has very important implications, so that we will not rush into things, especially in everyday life. Before we speak, if we can catch ourselves with whatever we were going to say, I think we will not hurt others and we will not be using our speech in an unwholesome or unskilful way.

In the same way before we act, if we can pause and try to see the intention why we want to do a particular thing, there again there can be a natural transformation in our action. On one occasion the Buddha was speaking to his son Rahula. The Buddha asked his son: What is the purpose of a mirror? And the little boy said the purpose of a mirror is to reflect. So the Buddha said that in the same way we should reflect about our speech and about our actions before doing them. But to exercise this reflection there has to be awareness and there has to be a pause.

Another aspect of observing the intention is that it can really enable us to discover our real motives for our actions. So in this way we can really understand ourselves, know who we are, the type of person we are. It will enable us to see the positive sides in ourselves and the negative sides also. It is very important to see both sides.

PRESENT MOMENT AWARENESS

Another aspect of awareness is to experience the present moment. Though we are physically here, mentally we can be elsewhere. Even while listening to me, physically you are present but mentally you can be back in Hong Kong. So it's only if we experience the present moment with the help of awareness that mentally and physically we can be present, we can be really in the here and the now, that we can really experience the present moment fully and completely.

And then it is also important when there is not awareness just to know: Now I'm not in the present but I'm thinking about what has happened or what is going to happen. Normally these things happen unconsciously without our knowledge, and then in this process we don't realise how they can create suffering for us, how they can create certain emotions in our minds. So with this type of practice we can develop mastery over our mind. Usually thoughts control us, but with this type of practice we will be able to develop mastery over our minds.

Another aspect of awareness is that we can use awareness to explore, to investigate, to learn, to find out what we are experiencing. So if you are experiencing physical pain, you can use awareness to start exploring the nature of pain. In ordinary life when we experience pain we merely try to get rid of it because it is unpleasant, but by reacting to pain in this way we never learn about pain, a very important part of the human condition. So with awareness, with this investigating faculty, we can make discoveries by ourselves about so many aspects of our mind and body.

If you can really make discoveries, start finding out, learning while you are here, then in everyday life you can continue to do that. What is beautiful is that we can learn from anything, we can learn from anyone. But we should have this openness and humility to try to learn, to try to discover the truth. Then meditation becomes interesting, because as I said, anything can be a learning experience, anything can be your teacher.

Another important aspect of awareness is that it naturally brings about an ethical and moral way of living which is very important for the practice. So while you are here, if you have awareness, in what ways will there be a change in your behaviour? Small things, little things, like opening the door, shutting the door, you learn to do them slowly, with awareness, so as not to disturb others around you. You see how your awareness naturally brings about a change in your actions.

So when we are preparing the meal or trying to set the table, here again we will try to do it without disturbing others. This is very important in meditation: learning to develop a sense of care and sensitivity for the people around you. Human beings are becoming more and more insensitive in this regard. They want to do their own thing, disregarding the consequences it can have on other people.

Another very important aspect of awareness is that we learn to develop self-confidence because we learn that with awareness and with our own effort we can do a great deal about ourselves. We develop self-confidence and self-reliance. Then we take responsibility for our own actions. We take responsibility for what is happening to us without blaming others and without blaming the surroundings. You take full responsibility for your own actions, for your own thoughts, for your own ways. This is an aspect that the Buddha emphasised very much.

I studied in a Buddhist school in Kandy and in the school we had a motto which was written in Pali. It means: "Self-help is the best help". So in this regard awareness is the key to the practice. This is why the Buddha called it the only way.

RIGHT EFFORT

Now I would like to say something about effort. Here there are two extremes that we need to avoid. One is trying too hard. The other is not trying at all. There are some very beautiful similes used in this connection in the texts. During the Buddha's time there was a monk who was trying very hard in walking meditation so that even his feet were bleeding. When the Buddha spoke to him, the Buddha realised that he was a musician. He used to play a lute, which is a stringed instrument. So the Buddha asked him: Now when playing a musical instrument if the strings are too loose or too tight, the music will not be right. So the Buddha said that effort also should not be too loose and it should not be too tight. This is what is called right effort.

Another simile the Buddha gave is that when you want to catch a small bird, if you grasp the bird too tightly you might kill the bird in the process, and if you grasp it in too loose a way the bird might escape. So in this way right effort can also be called effortless effort.

Now what happens when you try too hard? Naturally there is tension. You might even get a headache, you might feel tired and you might feel restlessness and disappointment because you are trying too hard, and with a strong expectation. Practising in this way you can never achieve what you want, so then you feel bad, you give yourself a minus, you start hating yourself and so on.

And if you do not try at all, what happens? Then you might feel sleepy, drowsy, you might get into a dream-like state. So here again it is by learning, by experimenting, by finding out for yourself that you know whether you are trying too hard or not trying at all. And sometimes we need to exercise more effort, sometimes we need to relax effort. So one thing which will help us is that if we can have a meditative mind, then when we are not meditating awareness becomes natural, it becomes effortless.

CULTURAL FACTORS IN MAKING RIGHT EFFORT

It's interesting for me that over the years I have been discovering the cultural factors relating to these two areas. Usually when I meet Westerners I realise that they try too hard, so I tell them to relax and take it easy. And with Sri Lankans it is the opposite, they're too relaxed. So with the Sri Lankans I have to push them, some of them. I'm curious to know which category you fall into.

RETREATANT: *Most of us work too hard, but some of us not enough.*

GODWIN: So most of you try too hard. Maybe this can be a cultural factor because here in this culture I think you are pushed and you have to achieve. So when you live in a culture where generally speaking you have to try hard, the danger is that you try to do things perfectly and this can create tension. I think it is O.K. to try to do things perfectly, thoroughly, it's a good quality, but when that quality generates tension and self-hatred it is not very wholesome. And those who are not practising hard enough must realise that and exercise right effort.

Now I would like to say something about the timetable and touch on some aspects of the practice. So the meditation practice should start at 4.30 a.m. when we hear the bell because it's a nice opportunity to start watching your mind when you hear the bell. And then after you rise there might be some difficult situations to face, and here again if you can watch what is happening it'll be a very fine preparation for the sitting here.

MEDIATION WHILE EATING

Now I would like to say something about eating. How eating can be a meditation. So here as you know one important aspect of eating is again, trying to be present while eating. It's a very important aspect of our life but most of the time in everyday life we eat in such a mechanical way, we even don't know sometimes what we are eating.

Before we start to eat, I would like to suggest to spend a few minutes just feeling grateful for those who have prepared the meal. This is very much emphasised in traditional Buddhist countries. So you develop the important quality of feeling grateful.

And then what normally happens when we start to eat is that we have thoughts. So here if you have awareness it's like when you are doing sitting meditating, you catch the thoughts that are arising and then let go of them and come back to eating.

One thing we should make a special effort to do is to chew our food properly. If we can really consciously chew our food it will even help our digestion. And then also you'll realise that you don't need lots of food because you eat consciously and even a little food can fill you.

Another aspect to emphasise is tasting. At what point do we really taste our food? I would like you to experiment and discover for yourself at what point you really start tasting the food. Another is swallowing our food, to consciously swallow our food.

Another thing that happens when we eat our food is we like certain food and dislike other food, or we neither like nor dislike the food. But most of these reactions happen habitually. So at least to be aware, to be conscious of this as a strong habit.

Another thing about food is the quantity of food. The Buddha advised meditators to avoid two extremes. One extreme is eating too much; the other extreme is eating too little. So again following the middle way in relation to eating. So while eating, how can we discover this right quantity? Can anyone suggest an answer?

RETREATANT: *When eating we can observe the sensations. When the stomach is full, there is a particular sensation.*

GODWIN: Yes. So in other words we have to listen to our body when we are eating. So if we can listen to our body, or as you said, the sensations in our body, then we'll be able on our own to discover the right quantity of food. It is very helpful to develop a sensitive body.

Another interesting area to work with is that we make decisions while we are eating. Do you drink water, do you drink Ovaltine, or do you drink both? Do you eat one bowlful or do you eat two? So it's interesting if you can be aware of these decisions you are making. Again, if you can catch your intention it'll be very interesting. It shows that even with a simple act of eating, if we can do it with awareness we can learn a great deal from it. And for all this learning, for all these discoveries, the mind has to be silent.

And as I said, we can also practise loving-kindness when we are eating. It is learning to take into account the persons with whom you are eating. As far as possible, whenever you get an opportunity give a helping hand to someone who might need it. It is a very important quality that we can develop, and we can develop this quality in silence and even in relation to eating. So it's interesting that we can practise loving-kindness in little acts, small acts, not just with big acts of love; but even with these small things we'll be developing the qualities of our heart. Actually I'm sometimes touched by the attention that I get from so many people when I eat. I feel as if I am pampered. I feel as if I'm treated as a child. I like it sometimes. But we should also learn to have the same concern for others in small ways, in little ways.

About working meditation: I already said in my last talk that we can see working meditation as an act of loving-kindness. We can learn so many qualities by working. It's about giving and it's about being generous. You learn patience in working with others. And if you can see work as not something different from meditation, then it is a very useful way of integrating meditation with daily life.

INDIVIDUAL AND OUTDOOR MEDITATION

I would like to say something about individual and outdoor meditation. One thing is that we hardly get an opportunity to spend some time alone with ourselves. So it's sometimes useful to spend some time completely alone with yourself, and see how you relate to yourself. Some people don't seem to enjoy their own company! They can't stand it for more than a few minutes. It shows that they don't find themselves interesting people, they are boring people. So it's very important to make a connection with yourself and in that situation to see whether you can relate to yourself as your best friend.

We have become so dependent on external things for our joy and happiness. I call them toys. Though we are grown up we have our toys, and without these toys we are completely lost. Sometimes our whole life is just changing one toy for another, like children, thinking that maybe this toy will give us pleasure and then finding that it doesn't give us pleasure at all, so that our whole life is spent changing one toy for another. I would like to suggest that meditation is learning to be your own toy, so that you can find yourself interesting and amusing. We can enjoy the dramas that go on in our own minds. We don't have to watch a television, we can amuse ourselves watching our own television in this way. We have so many channels! So this is one aspect of individual and outdoor meditation.

Another is about nature and learning to awaken our senses. Most of the time we use only one sense, that is thinking. According to Buddhist psychology this is the sixth sense, but we have other senses which we sometimes neglect. So we can awaken the sense of seeing by looking at things, looking at flowers, looking at little objects, looking at the sky, the clouds. In fact we can develop concentration in this way.

I know some meditators who find it easier to concentrate in this way rather than concentrate on the breath, where they can have complete awareness of what they are seeing, and they are fully experiencing the present moment in that situation. And when we see something beautiful, what happens in our mind? Can anyone suggest what happens when you see beautiful mountains, beautiful flowers, beautiful birds?

RETREATANT: *We have joy.*

GODWIN: That's it exactly. In fact in the Buddhist texts there are many references to seeing something beautiful. On one occasion the Buddha was walking with Ananda, his attendant,

and at some point he said: Look back, what beautiful scenery we are passing through! There is a section in the Pali texts where it describes how monks and nuns became enlightened, and in that section some of them describe how the beauty of nature was very inspiring, because most of these monks and nuns were living in forests. And sometimes, as we are living in towns, big towns, where we don't see nature very often, we are losing this sensitivity for appreciating something beautiful, for learning to relate to nature in this way.

Another way I would suggest that you can use individual and outdoor meditation is to meditate on your own. Here when we are meditating in a group, you don't have enough freedom to experiment on your own, to make your own discoveries. So when you are meditating on your own you have the freedom to discover, to find out, to learn, by yourself. I will also be encouraging meditators to reflect on certain themes during this time.

I would also like to meet meditators individually. I can see three meditators during one session, and three meditators later on, so I can meet about six meditators in one day. I would like to meet every one of you. I don't like the word interview, so just come and have a chat with me, a discussion about the practice.

So this is about the timetable. Now I would like to tell you what I might try to do during the next few days. I thought that each day we might try to emphasise one aspect of the practice. Not that you should forget it on the following day! But on one particular day to emphasise that meditation subject. So tomorrow, let's make awareness the main object of meditation. Whether we are here or whether we are outside we will make an effort to develop awareness tomorrow.

Maybe the next day we might try to use awareness to focus on one object at a time. The object can be the breathing when we are meditating. When we are eating, the object would be what we are eating. When we are walking and standing, the object is walking and standing. When we are in nature, we will use awareness to see some objects or hear things very sharply, with a very focused mind.

Another day we will have a whole day of loving-kindness. So during the day of loving-kindness we will try to heal our wounds, forgiving ourselves, forgiving others. We will try to practise more and more opening our hearts to ourselves and more and more opening our hearts to others.

And then maybe another day we will try to work with pleasant emotions and unpleasant emotions, especially using tools to work with unpleasant emotions. Then maybe there can be a day for working with our thoughts, a very important aspect in our daily life, and in meditating here also.

Then we will have some days to really experience two very important insights, the importance of *anicca*: change, and the importance of *anatta*: no-self. And we can see how these different aspects of the practice are related.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Any questions about what has been said so far?

RETREATANT: *When you said there will be days where we will practise working with our thoughts, does that mean having no thoughts?*

GODWIN: No, it's mostly working *with* our thoughts. I will be emphasising that aspect. Sometimes when we work with our thoughts, just to see that there can be gaps, space, between two thoughts. Interesting practice. This doesn't mean that insights like impermanence or no-self may not arise even before that. So just be open to them every day but maybe on particular days we might focus on some of these important things.

Now we can do some chanting, S. chants the first section of the Dhammapada very well. So maybe tomorrow we might be able to give a translation of that poem because it has a very interesting verse about the importance of the mind. As it is a long chant, today we will try to just listen to it. It's very soothing and very nice just listening to it, using the chant to experience the present moment. And then slowly, slowly, everyone else can learn it also. It'll be nice if everyone can chant it together, it's beautiful.

GUIDED MEDITATION

Before we start to chant let us create some space in our mind for the sounds.

We can hear some drops of water.

Dogs barking.

The chanting of the insects.

Experiencing the present moment with the help of the sounds.

Sound of the wind.

Is it possible to hear sounds with fewer thoughts, or with no thoughts even for a few minutes?

[Chanting]

Let us see ourselves as our best friend. Try to really feel it, feel it in every part of your body, your whole being. And being your best friend, can you have trust and confidence in yourself?

Learning to open our heart to ourselves.

Let us now extend this feeling of friendliness to everyone in this room. See everyone in this room as spiritual friends, noble friends.

Can we feel grateful for this moment? That we can sit here peacefully with a group of friends around us.

May you sleep peacefully and wake up peacefully.

For those who would like to continue the practise here or to practise outside, you're most welcome to do so, and let us make an effort to make full use of our stay here. Thank you.

DAY 2: THE ADVANTAGES OF MEDITATION PRACTICE

GODWIN: I will talk about a few things we have been trying to do today, what are the benefits, what are the advantages we gather from our practice and in what way it will help us in everyday life.

One thing is that we are so used to doing things, manipulating things, controlling things. So this strong conditioning comes up when we are meditating where even in relation to our breathing, without allowing the body to breathe naturally, we try to control it, we try to breathe differently and so on. Even in walking meditation sometimes this conditioning can come up. So what we tried to do today, which is not very easy, was just being, learning non-doing in relation to meditation. This is one of the things we were trying to do.

Another is that when we are meditating we like some experiences, we dislike other experiences. We like the pleasant experiences to continue and we like the unpleasant experiences not to be there. So our meditation becomes a big battle. Wanting things, not wanting things, accepting things, rejecting things. So what we tried to do today was to learn to have a completely open mind to whatever arises. When we have pleasant states of mind, we just know that there are pleasant states of mind. We learn not to hold on to them. If it is there, it is there. If it goes away, we allow it to go away. And if some unpleasant experiences arise, here again it is a very strong conditioning we have to hate them, to dislike them, to get rid of them. So in the practice we did today, as I said, we were learning to be open to pleasant experiences, and to be open to unpleasant experiences, and learning, which is not very easy, actually to see no difference between these two states of mind by just knowing, by just being aware.

And then what we were doing today was to be aware in relation to what is happening, what is arising internally in us. It can be unpleasant emotions, it can be unpleasant sensations, it can be what you consider as negative thoughts. We learn just to allow them, we learn just to let them be by using awareness. Now in everyday life we might have two sorts of problems. One is, of course, what is happening internally, but the problem is mostly in relation to what is happening externally. Here we are fortunate that nothing difficult arises externally, but in everyday life that is not so. So if you can learn how these problems arise, what happens inside yourself, then you learn to watch and to work with what is happening inside your minds in everyday life.

This is a very important tool, a very important skill to develop because then whatever is happening externally, we learn to look inside ourselves and to work with what is happening inside us in relation to what is happening outside. What we normally try to do in everyday life is to modify, to change, to try to control what is happening externally to suit us, but as we all know we are unable to do this because we have little control over external events.

So the practice, interestingly enough, is not to try to do that. Of course, if you can do it in certain situations it is good, but what is more important is learning to bring about a change within us, inside us. So ideally, whatever happens externally, when a transformation has taken place inside you, then you are able to relate to it, not to be surprised by what is happening but, as we are practising here, learning not to react to it.

It is interesting that in certain cultures what is happening externally can be more unpredictable, because unexpected things often happen. Maybe here, it's not so bad because you get the impression that everything is under control, and to a great extent you can

predict what will happen. But in a country like Sri Lanka it is entirely different. You never know what's going to happen. Always the unexpected can happen. I will give just one or two examples.

Now here I have been travelling on the railway system, there is no problem, there is always a train. You can time a visit and you'll be able to catch a particular train and you'll be there. In Sri Lanka this doesn't happen. You may not even know whether there *is* a next train. So you go to the train station and they say today the train is two hours late or there is some problem with the rail track and today there is no train. So this is very good for the practice because you learn to be open to uncertainty.

This is a very deep but very profound aspect of the Buddha's teaching, to be open to uncertainty, to be open to the unexpected, because this is the real nature of life. So realising that this is the real nature of life we cease trying to control the environment in particular ways. Of course it can give a sense of security when you think that everything is under control and there is no problem, but this kind of security is a very fragile, false kind of security.

According to the Buddha's teaching, real security comes when we can be open to insecurity. When we are open to insecurity, then whatever happens, to a great extent you'll not be surprised and then you can see that as an object of meditation, you can make an effort to learn from that. So in a way what we are doing, what we have been doing today, is a kind of preparation for that. Internally we are allowing anything to arise, any unexpected things to arise, such as an emotion, a sensation, or a thought. So whatever arises we learn to see them, as the Buddha said, just as they are.

Another aspect of what we tried to do today is that by trying to continue to have awareness in all postures, in all situations, we are learning to see meditation as a way of living. Otherwise what happens is that we associate meditation only with a particular posture, or with a particular time that we are meditating. The danger when we practise in that way is that when the person is sitting there is one kind of individual, but when the same person is interacting with society another kind of individual arises. So there is a big gap between the meditator sitting and the person functioning in everyday life. What we have been trying to do today is to make this gap smaller and smaller so that meditation becomes, as I said, a way of living. Then any situation in life can be a meditation, can become an object of meditation. So if we are really serious about the practice we have to slowly, slowly make an effort so that meditation becomes a way of living.

BEGINNER'S MIND

Another aspect of what we have been trying to do today is that we have no model, no prior idea or expectation of what should happen or what should not happen. It is interesting that if we have such an idea, a model, an image in everyday life, and if what happens does not correspond to that model, then suffering arises. And this is exactly how suffering is created when we are meditating. So if we meditate with an idea, a model of what should happen and what should not happen, and if the meditation does not correspond with this idea, this model, this can also create suffering. It's not only that, but we might even start hating ourselves because we cannot achieve what we think we should achieve. I know some persons who have given up meditation because they tell me that they cannot succeed in meditation, they say they cannot concentrate when they're meditating or whatever.

So here we meditate with what can be described as a beginner's mind, a don't-know mind, and whatever arises - it can be pleasant, it can be unpleasant - that becomes the object of meditation. And this continues whether you are sitting, standing, walking, lying down - in all the postures. We are learning, we are finding out, we are having this awareness in all situations.

In a way, we have to have a kind of expectation of what we are going to achieve eventually in meditation, but while practising I would suggest just to forget that, and then whatever happens becomes the practice. The simile I have thought of is like someone who is climbing a mountain. The idea is, one day, to reach the top of the mountain but if we are so much concerned, pre-occupied with what we are going to see when we reach the top, then what is happening while climbing we don't see clearly. But in this process of climbing, the adventures we have, the falls we have, the wounds we might sustain, all this we can really learn from, this can be the practice. So in the same way, we can have some idea of what we will eventually achieve in meditation but I would consider, I would suggest that what is more important is to learn about, to discover, to explore, to be open to what is happening from moment to moment.

Maybe another point related to this is that when we practise in this way, we are always trying to achieve results in the future. So that we are practising in order to become free or whatever in the future. But in the way that I am describing the practice, the way that I am suggesting, the results are not in the future but the results are right now, right in front of us.

So these are some aspects of what we were trying to do today. Maybe the important insights we can develop about impermanence, about change and especially about the most important aspect in the Buddha's teaching, to experience emptiness or no-self, are also related to the way we are practising. So I will touch on these aspects during the coming days, exploring and emphasising them.

Another point related to what we have been trying to do is to make discoveries, to learn, to find out. In this way you become very self-reliant, you develop lots of self-confidence. Sometimes there is a nice phrase that is used: you become a spiritual warrior.

There are two types of warriors. One is the person who worries all the time, or most of the time. But in the practice what is encouraged is to be a spiritual warrior, to have trust, to have confidence in yourself, to have courage. So in this practice that we have been trying to do here, we develop these qualities and therefore we are open like a spiritual warrior to any situation, to any experience because we know that we can handle it, we know what to do. We don't have to push things away, we don't have to deny things, there is no need to refuse to look at things. So with this courage, with this trust, with this confidence, we are prepared, we are being open to whatever arises because we know that whatever arises we can handle it, we can use the Buddha's teachings in any situation.

There is no need to agree with me! If you want to raise any questions, please feel free to do so.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON TIREDNESS AND DROWSINESS

RETREATANT: *I want to know, is awareness related to whether you are physically tired or not?*

GODWIN: When we are tired I think we all have the experience that it is not easy to practise awareness, we don't have enough energy within us to practise awareness. So when we feel tired and when we don't have energy, we might try to use some techniques, some devices, where we can try to develop some energy. This is the question you are raising?

RETREATANT: *Yes.*

GODWIN: We will take a practical example which you can relate to, because here in Hong Kong I know that you have to work from morning to about 7:00 or 7:30 in the evening. And here I have seen people working and they are really working throughout the day. Again a very interesting contrast to what happens in Sri Lanka.

After working so hard, when you go home you are really tired. Now an interesting question arises: When you go back home, how can you practise awareness? Here again, if you are really interested in the practice what you can do is maybe to take a shower and then try to recover to some extent from this feeling of tiredness. On the last day I hope to speak about how to integrate meditation with daily life and then I'll offer some tools on how you can try to work during the day without getting too tired, by having certain breaks, and how you can use meditation then.

So after taking a shower, if you can do some of the yoga exercises then at least this type of thing might help you to recover from this feeling of tiredness. And maybe do a simple meditation. I think that to have the motivation to sit may be asking too much, so this is why I have been encouraging you to use reflection. It is an interesting exercise just to reflect on how you spent the day. This can be a very useful kind of meditation, a useful kind of reflection to do each day, even for 10 or 15 minutes. Anyway this is my response to the question of feeling tired and the practice of awareness.

Anything else?

RETREATANT: *My experience is the opposite to this question. I can be physically tired but I can also be aware because awareness does not involve much energy. Sometimes when I translate I'm physically tired, so tired that I cannot even straighten my back, but still I can listen to the words and then translate. The physical tiredness does not disturb the awareness in my experience. Physically I might have no strength but my mind has awareness.*

GODWIN: I can relate very much to what you said.

RETREATANT: *This is because he is on a higher level of attainment.*

GODWIN: I think I would agree that he has attained a high state but I will just make a suggestion and maybe you can try it out when you are feeling tired.

RETREATANT: *What I mentioned before about tiredness that is not physical, it's because I am an office worker and I do a lot of thinking during my work, like thinking about how to arrange my work, how to structure the daily work. My experience is that when I get tired, my awareness is loose.*

GODWIN: I will try to briefly touch on both aspects: when the mind is tired and when the body is tired. So first let us take the situation where you feel that your body is very tired. Now here is something very interesting which we can learn from because sometimes, I wouldn't say everytime, sometimes the feeling of physical tiredness can have a psychological reason. Supposing, to give an example, you have not slept the previous night. So now what happens is you think: last night I did not sleep well. So you are assuming: Now I should be feeling tired. It is really not the body that is feeling tired but the thought which says you did not sleep well, and that thought can really affect you in this way. Sometimes it is interesting using awareness to find out: Now do I really feel tiredness in the body or do I feel some tiredness in the mind? Or are you projecting what is happening in your mind to the body and assuming that the body is also tired?

When I am in the Meditation Centre at Nilambe in Sri Lanka, some of you who have been there will remember that from the main road you have to climb some distance, so sometimes I come by bus and start climbing. Sometimes when I have climbed some distance I think I have walked a long distance and then I think, maybe I should feel tired. So then I try to find out: now actually is my body feeling tired?

In this connection there is the Buddha's famous suggestion about working with sleepiness and drowsiness. So he gives some techniques for working with this feeling of sleepiness and drowsiness and then he said if all these techniques fail, then you should just go to sleep! How I understand this is exactly what I am saying: to find out whether the feeling of being sleepy or drowsy has some physical reasons or has some psychological reasons. So if it has actually some physical reasons, then you have to learn to be kind to the body and you have to do something about it. But as I was saying, if it has some psychological reasons, then when you use these tools you'll realise that it is only your thoughts, the psychological aspect, that is creating the physical tiredness or drowsiness.

So now let me say something about mental tiredness, how during the day, working with the computer, or being busy planning and so on, you get tired and then it is not easy to be aware because of this mental tiredness. Here it is very important that when you are very busy, when you have to do very hard work using your mind, that you should learn to relax. Now during the day there can be very short breaks, even just 5 minute breaks, and during these short breaks there should be practised techniques that help you to recover from this build-up that happens during the day.

When I say this, I would like to mention a very good friend of mine in Kandy. He's one of the leading lawyers in Kandy. Now he is a very committed and serious meditator. In his house there are two meditation classes every week. This man has a family and lots of responsibilities, but he gets up at 3:30 in the morning for his practice. Now you can imagine how in a court of law he has to argue cases, he has to use his brain, he has to use his mind to win his lawsuits, so he can be in very intense situations. He says one of the benefits of meditation is that he can do this very sharply, very clearly. In the past he would get tired, but now with meditation, because he is relaxed, he is also calm and clear, he gets less tired or he doesn't get tired at all. And because of the changes that his colleagues saw in him a few more lawyers have now taken to meditation.

Anything else?

RETREATANT: *I want to ask about drowsiness during meditation. Sometimes I find that even though my body has been given enough rest, drowsiness still occurs. Previously I thought my drowsiness came about because I could not maintain awareness, but then I tried to make further discoveries and I*

found that maybe the drowsiness is because I was sitting quietly and there are no noises around and the breathing becomes fine. So the reason as to why I feel drowsy in that situation is probably because my awareness is not sharp enough. This is the discovery I have made. I have tried every week to practise awareness and sometimes I can maintain it, but not all the time. I would like you to give me some advice or suggestions on that.

GODWIN: Generally speaking, drowsiness can have different causes depending on the type of person. One is the quality of that person's sleep in the night. Sometimes you might have slept for long hours but if the sleep is not deep and relaxing, during the day you can feel sleepy as a result.

Another reason for feeling drowsy in meditation is the quantity of food that you have eaten. Sometimes if you have eaten too much or too little it is also possible that you might feel drowsy.

Another reason which I have discovered while working with meditators is that sometimes they don't want to see what is arising in meditation. So sometimes sleepiness can be used as an excuse not to look at unpleasant things that are arising. It's an interesting reason. And sometimes when we feel relaxed while we are meditating, then also sleepiness comes.

So whatever the reasons are, one thing that can be attempted is to change the posture. This is one of the recommendations of the Buddha also. So if you are sitting, you can do some walking meditation, you can do some very quick walking meditation, or you can try to walk backwards. The idea is just to induce more energy using walking meditation.

Another thing that can be attempted, and this is where awareness is important, is to sharpen your awareness so that when signs of sleepiness are coming, you'll be able to catch it and then do something about it, either open your eyes or stand up or start walking.

The third thing which I mentioned when I spoke about effort yesterday is that sometimes when your effort is too weak, you can feel sleepy. So then you can make more effort to sustain awareness, you can try a little harder.

Now if there are no more questions we can do some chanting.

[Chanting]

DAY 3: ANAPANASATI & METTA MEDITATION

GODWIN: I would like to say something about awareness of breathing and also something about loving-kindness.

Awareness of the breath is a very simple technique - but somehow we manage to complicate it in many ways. And sometimes I think one problem might be with the word "concentration". In Chinese, the word "concentration", what does it mean, what is the picture that comes to your mind when the word "concentration" is used?

RETREATANT: *Put all the effort on something and forget other things.*

GODWIN: It's interesting that you have to try very hard, so that effort is very much emphasised in that word, in its meaning. And maybe another meaning is ignoring and excluding things. So this is why by using the word concentration in this sense, the technique seems difficult. But you must see what the technique really means: essentially the meaning is simply awareness in relation to the in-breath and the out-breath. So the whole emphasis is on just knowing what is happening. This is referred to in one of the texts which says that when we practise this technique, then we experience the four foundations of awareness or mindfulness. What it means is: you become aware of the body, you become aware of the sensations, you become aware of the thoughts, you become aware of the state of mind.

But when we practise this technique, we think that we should not have thoughts, that we should not have other sensations, that we should not hear sounds, so we try to exclude them and only be with the breath, and that can create lots of tension and lots of suffering. I would suggest instead that we do it in this way: just knowing, just having awareness of what is happening and then allowing calm to come naturally. You can never get it by force, you can never get it by trying. This is maybe why in the text it is said that when there is loving-kindness the mind becomes calm naturally. So rather than hating things, rather than fighting things, resisting things, controlling things, you just know what is happening, then let calm arise naturally.

The idea of Buddhist meditation is to free ourselves from suffering but sometimes the way we practise this technique creates more suffering. When we practise this simple way we can experience the absence of suffering right at that moment. So when thoughts come you don't suffer, you just know it. When you hear sound you don't suffer, you know that you hear it. When there is physical pain you don't suffer, you just know that there is pain. When the mind is not calm you don't suffer, but you realise that the mind is not calm. When you realise that you are not with the breath but somewhere else, you don't suffer as a result of it, you realise that you have not had awareness, so you re-establish awareness and come back to the breath.

Another aspect of the technique that is forgotten is that after you have finished sitting meditation, when you leave the place, you should continue to have that same level of awareness in the other postures, in whatever you are doing, and then when you come back to sitting practise you just continue that awareness.

I would like to share with you a meditation technique that has been discovered in Burma. I would like you to experiment with it, try it out. So here when you have thoughts you just note them, you just label them: "thinking" or "thoughts". The technique is that you don't get involved in the individual thoughts, what you are thinking, but just realise that there is

thinking. So you note it and then come back to the breath. When you hear a sound, you don't say it is an aeroplane or it is someone speaking but you just say "sounds". And whatever you experience in the body, you just see it as a sensation. So you note it, label it as just "sensation" or "feeling" and come back to the breath. With this technique you verbalise, but in the other technique which I teach you don't verbalise, you are just aware of what is happening.

So these are some points relating to this technique. At the Chi Lin Nunnery I spoke about the benefits of this technique. If you have any questions relating to this you can ask me later on.

LOVING-KINDNESS

Let me say something very briefly about meditation of loving-kindness because I have already spoken a lot about this technique. So here I would say one important aspect of meditation of loving-kindness is that it helps us to experience joy.

In the Buddhist model of meditation, first we work with what are called the hindrances or the obstacles. We can see them as unpleasant emotions. Then the next stage is working with them using loving-kindness or even using focusing on breathing. Then we can sometimes experience *jhanas* or the absorptions when these hindrances or unpleasant emotions are absent. So these absorptions or *jhanas* can be seen as positive emotions. And the next stage of meditation is that when there is joy, to remember not to identify with the joy but see that also as changing, as impermanent, and realise that we don't really own this positive state of mind. So this in simple terms is one way of understanding the Buddhist model of meditation.

WORKING WITH EMOTIONS

If there are no questions, I would like to say what we might try to do tomorrow. So tomorrow is a day for working with emotions, both unpleasant emotions and pleasant emotions. In a way, what is more important is to learn to work with unpleasant emotions because this is what creates our suffering and this is what we have to work with in everyday life. I think we are all familiar with unpleasant emotions. There is no one who has not experienced them, including myself. It might be helpful to discover, to reflect and find out which unpleasant emotion really affects you most or bothers you most. So tomorrow it might be sometimes helpful, useful, to work with that particular emotion or those emotions that bother you in everyday life. I have already presented some tools. I will try to go over them and maybe mention some more.

One thing I have been emphasising is that when unpleasant emotions arise to learn to be friendly to them. By hating them, by disliking them, we give them more power. And in hating and disliking them we might also be pushing them away, repressing them, which is also not very good because they can come up in the most unexpected situations. So here again is the importance of awareness, just to know them, just to feel them with awareness.

Another very important tool related to this is that we have to learn not to give these unpleasant emotions minuses. So tomorrow if they arise please give yourself a big plus, because you are learning to work with them, so you deserve a big plus. In everyday life also when they arise, rather than give them a minus, if you can give them a plus and then make them the object of meditation, this can be a very powerful tool.

Another tool is learning about them, finding out about them, discovering about them as I have been emphasising. If you hate them and if you want to get rid of them, how can you learn about them? And if you are prepared to learn about them and if you are open to them, then tomorrow you can wait until they arise. What do you think will happen when you really wait for them to arise?

RETREATANT: *They might not come.*

GODWIN: Exactly. So this is a very important realisation for you which you might experience tomorrow.

So when you fear them and you don't want them to come then they come. And as I said, if you are prepared for them, invite them, are open to them, they don't come. So I hope you will really experience that.

On the first day I said that what we will be trying to do in this retreat is to develop insight, to develop skills, not to have only pleasant and calm experiences. So these are the insights I had in mind, because when you are here, when you develop these insights, when you develop these tools, then when unpleasant emotions arise in everyday life you will know how to deal with them.

Maybe another very important insight based on the Buddha's teaching is to realise that these things are impermanent. Whatever arises passes away. I hope tomorrow you'll also develop that insight. So please don't try to get rid of them through your will, by controlling, but when they are there just let them be there and let them go away; let the impermanence operate naturally. Another insight is to realise that they don't belong to you because they are visitors. So visitors come and go. It means that they don't belong to you.

I hope you will try some of these tools and then what is important is to hopefully develop self-confidence, self-reliance and trust. It means that you can say: Let them come, I know what to do with them. I would like to emphasise that this is very important.

So tomorrow we will not only be working with unpleasant emotions; we'll also be trying, with awareness, to find out when they are absent. This is another very important tool, very important insight, because we have given these unpleasant emotions such power, such energy, that when they are absent we hardly know that they are absent. So tomorrow please make a special effort just to check during the day, what is my state of mind? Am I having unpleasant emotions or am I having pleasant emotions? And then what is very important is that when there are unpleasant emotions, as I said, don't give them a minus. And when pleasant emotions are there, don't give a plus and hold on to them. Without a plus, without a minus, learning to see them just as they are. So tomorrow will be a very important day in this retreat.

We will do some chanting now.

GUIDED MEDITATION

Let us create some space in our mind.

Can you hear the chanting of the insects? You can hear it very faintly.

When we are with the sounds can we have fewer thoughts? To hear sounds we don't need thoughts.

[Chanting]

Thank you very much.

Let us just be in this very beautiful, friendly atmosphere.

Feeling grateful for this moment.

Can we feel as one family of spiritual friends?

Can we wish everyone in this room: May everyone in this room be well, be happy, and be peaceful.

Let us bow to each other.

May you all sleep well, sleep peacefully, and wake up peacefully.

DAYS 4-7: SHARING EXPERIENCES AND INSIGHTS

[Editor's Note: At this stage in the retreat Godwin very purposefully encouraged the retreatants to reflect on and share what they had experienced and learned through their practice. I have restructured the resulting free-flowing discussion by grouping together sharings and teachings on particular themes for greater coherence and comprehensibility.]

USING THOUGHTS CREATIVELY

Today the object of meditation will be our thoughts. This is a very important area. In simple terms, it is because of thoughts that we have suffering. Another thing is that from morning, from the time we wake up, to the time we go to sleep we have thoughts going through our mind continuously. So we should learn how to use our thoughts. We should learn to make discoveries about our thoughts. We should learn the important connection, relationship, between thoughts and emotions, because it is mostly a thought that creates an emotion. And when the emotion is there it is again the thought that makes it worse. Then sometimes these negative thoughts can be a very strong habit with some people. I know meditators who have this strong habit to give themselves minuses, and they give minuses to others also. So one can create a hell where only minuses exist.

Another very interesting and important area for us to discover is how we can create stories from our thoughts. Now from what happened to S. this morning, being locked in the toilet, she could have created a big story. She had one hour to create a big story. She could have started by saying it is someone who doesn't like my yoga who did this to me, and for one hour she could have been imagining who the person might be who did this to her. Then she might have thought: Maybe it is that person; the way that person looks at me, it seems that person doesn't like me. It is possible that she did it. We are laughing, but this is exactly how we create our stories.

We can use our thoughts in a very destructive way in creating such stories. Most of our suffering comes from this kind of imagination, using thoughts to create stories. And what is unfortunate is that we take the stories as real. It is funny how we give reality to something unreal and then we become victims of the stories that we create ourselves. And with such a story S. could have had anger. Or she could have had fear. Or anxiety that whenever she goes to the toilet someone is going to lock the door on her! So in this way she could have had all these emotions: anger, fear, insecurity, perhaps sadness. Do you see how the story and these emotions are related? Do you realise how important it is for us to be aware and to understand the nature of thoughts?

I would suggest that we can use thoughts destructively in the way that I have been describing and we can also use thoughts creatively to free ourselves from our suffering. So it is important in our practice to see the difference.

Using thoughts creatively is using reflection. So perhaps on the last day I would like you to reflect on the Four Noble Truths in everyday life. This can be a very important reflection: How do I create my own suffering in everyday life? Because being in a place like this you can get some sort of distance from what is happening in daily life. To see the different situations in life where you suffer. Then to reflect: Now in what way do I create my own suffering in this situation? From that you can realise the third and fourth Noble Truths: this is the way I should work with my suffering. So when you do this reflection, I would like to

get you to reflect very deeply. And then what is important is whether you are really clear how to find a way out of suffering. This is how we can use thoughts creatively.

So today our object of meditation will be our thoughts. And then from these thoughts I would like you to make your own discoveries about yourself. Our thoughts, our pre-occupations, tell us a lot about ourselves.

Does anyone have any questions?

RETREATANT: *Before the questions, on behalf of everyone, I just want to say sorry to S. because until now I did not know we had locked her in the toilet.*

GODWIN: I think it has not been done intentionally! And what is interesting is that what can be considered as a negative experience, we can make it positive by meditating on it. So this is a very important principle. In any situation in life we can create stories and suffer, or we can use the same situation not to suffer but to learn from that situation. So S. should be thankful to the person who gave her this opportunity, and hope tomorrow the person will give her another opportunity!

Anyway it is nice that we can have a very light-hearted discussion. Dhamma discussions need not always be so very serious and intense. Sometimes this lightness and humour can be very relaxing for our practice, to be able to laugh at life.

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RETREATANT: *My question is about working with thoughts. I had a walk in the forest and I saw a bee and automatically my heart vibrated a bit. So I think when we are not engrossed in thoughts we can see much more.*

GODWIN: When we have strong pre-occupations, when our mind is full of thoughts, we can hardly see anything externally. You might be passing through the most beautiful place but you hardly notice the beauty because your mind is full of these pre-occupations and thoughts.

In the same way we can't see what is in our own mind when there is no space and no clarity. This is why, on the first or second day, I gave an exercise to awaken the senses by seeing things very sharply and hearing things very clearly. Then that can create more space and clarity in your mind, and you'll be able to feel things very clearly also.

However much these things are told, they may not make any sense until you have a glimpse, a small experience of these matters. So this is the beauty of meditation, that you can see for yourself, not because someone says so, or because something is mentioned in the books. So the whole emphasis in meditation is for *you* to see it, for you to experience it for yourself.

RETREATANT: *One thing you always stressed throughout your talks is the need to create space in our minds. Actually I never really thoroughly understood how to create space in my mind. But today when I was doing my work during working meditation, I had no idea what thoughts I had in my mind throughout the period of working meditation, probably because I was pre-occupied with my work. I was busy and so I did not know at all what thoughts went through my mind, there was no clarity at all. But when I came here for sitting meditation after that session, I settled down and listened to the sounds in the room. And then later on I began to notice that thoughts were going through my mind*

and what they were. So that experience enabled me to taste and know for myself what creating space in our mind really means. This is very important.

GODWIN: So it is interesting that when we do working meditation, there could be thoughts in the mind, but if your attention is only on the work that you are doing, then as you said, it creates space in the mind. And once that space is created one can really use that space for feeling things. Or as happened in your case, for hearing things very sharply and very clearly.

So in everyday life when we work, can we see work as working meditation? In whatever work you do in everyday life, maybe related to your job, is it possible at the time of doing something to be completely present in doing that? This is a very practical way of integrating meditation with the way we are living. To see work as not something different from meditation.

MEDITATION WITH THE BODY

RETREATANT: *Very interestingly today I looked into who is the body. The body is just a feeling but my thought is that this is my body. I was just thinking about the sutta where the Buddha said that everybody sees the body as a valuable thing, but the Buddha said the body of an arahant is just a burden. In a small part I had this feeling.*

GODWIN: That it is a burden?

RETREATANT: *Yes, because we are just these things, nothing there, nothing valuable; and yet we attach to it, it is a burden, lots of worries, some sort of suffering.*

GODWIN: I know of a text in which it says the body is a burden, feelings are a burden, what are called the five aggregates are burdens. Here the idea is they become a burden if we identify ourselves with them. A burden is something that we have to carry. So to put down the burden that we are carrying we have to learn not to identify with these five aggregates. Then they do not become a burden because, as you rightly said, in the case of an *arahant*, an enlightened person, this is how he or she sees the five aggregates. To put it in another way, these five aggregates when we are identifying ourselves with them become a source of suffering, and if we can let go of identification with these five aggregates, then the burden goes away and there is no suffering.

Would anyone else like to share something?

RETREATANT: *This is another point connected with this feeling. While the feeling of the body and the ego becomes less and less yet I feel that there is still something there, sensations in the body, like stray cats or dogs that have come. They just come around so you have to take care of them even though you don't identify yourself with them.*

GODWIN: Yes, certainly. That is why the *arahants* eat.

RETREATANT: *So in this respect loving-kindness is very useful, loving-kindness towards our body although our own body is like stray cats and dogs. It seems as though it is loving-kindness to oneself.*

GODWIN: That's useful. This reminds me of one of the stories in the Buddhist texts. The Buddha emphasised to a group of monks to develop a feeling of foulness towards the body. And some of the monks who meditated on foulness in a very serious and intense way committed suicide because they started hating their bodies. Then the Buddha immediately

emphasised the importance of developing loving-kindness. So maybe with loving-kindness you learn to detach yourself not by hating the body but with friendliness, learning to dis-identify yourself.

RETREATANT: *I would like to add one comment to the other gentleman's experience. That is, I have heard from another Buddhist teacher who said something about our body which really struck me. He said that although we may find our body a burden sometimes we have to understand that our body is the total result of our past actions. And as the body is the result of our past actions, so we are responsible for it, because Buddhism teaches us not only to put down things or ignore them, but it also tells us to discharge our duties responsibly. So even though this body is going to get old, get sick and die, and more and more problems may come, we have to understand that this is the result of our past actions. So we have to take good care of this body in order to discharge the responsibilities which we created in our past, and also make use of our body as a vehicle to carry on with our practice.*

GODWIN: Yes. That's the area which I want to emphasise. I'm happy you touched on that aspect. In fact this is related to one of the reflections meditating monks do in Sri Lanka and maybe also in other countries where there are serious meditators. Before they start to eat they say that I am eating the food not to make this body beautiful but so that the body can survive and so that I can use the body as a vehicle for the practice.

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RETREATANT: *I enjoy the yoga sessions led by S. very much and two points mentioned by her especially. The first point is she always emphasises that we should have a smile when doing yoga so that we can really relax ourselves. And the second point is that she emphasises we should try to enjoy doing simple actions. I think this is very important. And after practising yoga I remind myself to smile when I practise walking meditation or standing meditation outdoors, and I find that a smile can help me to relax my body and my mind.*

GODWIN: In fact that reminds there is a famous meditation master from Vietnam, Thich Nhat Hanh, who emphasises very much that when you are sitting also, just to smile while sitting. He says that when you have a Buddha-like smile the face can relax and the meditation can be relaxed, there can be a lightness to the practice. And he also emphasises very much the need to smile at others. The only thing is that it must come naturally.

RETREATANT: *I want to ask her, when she practises toilet meditation, does she smile or not?*

RETREATANT S: *I don't think so, but I will try!*

GODWIN: It is interesting that the Buddha said in one text, called the Satipatthana Sutta, the *sutta* which describes how one should develop awareness, that even when we are in the toilet we should make an effort to be mindful, to be aware. So it's interesting that in whatever you do, even when you are in the toilet, you can use meditation.

DISCUSSION ON EATING

RETREATANT: *I went downstairs for lunch after you suggested we focus on greed. By the time I got downstairs the food was on the table. But before my eyes even made contact with it my nose did, and it's amazing how greed just blew up and I felt like an animal. It is quite clear when you really stop and, to use that expression that someone used last night, if you look at greed from a third person's perspective, it just comes up and just goes away. I'm an animal, with very strong volition.*

And then after I had my first bowl of food, what really brought things into perspective was that for me it's virtually like crossing the stream, to not have that second bowl. For me it was like going against the stream. I really had to use will-power and say: no, that's enough.

GODWIN: I appreciate your honesty in sharing your experience in this way.

RETREATANT: *Were you a little more hungry than you were yesterday since you only had the one bowlful?*

RETREATANT: *Since lunchtime I didn't notice any difference at all.*

GODWIN: So it shows that the hunger is mostly in our head, our concepts, rather than what you really feel in the stomach.

RETREATANT: *Thinking of the banquets that I have been to in Hong Kong, the food that has been presented and how much can be consumed, it's flabbergasting.*

GODWIN: For the poor Sri Lankan there is sadly no such thing.

RETREATANT: *Eating is guided by our concepts. I do not eat something because it tastes good or bad but rather because it is healthy. I love drinking soups, particularly the ones prepared by our kind lady chef here. At home I normally drink about two or three bowls of soup because I love soup which I consider to be healthy, whether it tastes good or not. And today when I had already had my first bowl of soup and I was going to have some more, I hesitated because I remembered what you said: that we should mind whether other people would need to drink the soup as well, people who have not yet had any. So I thought: should I forgo this extra bowl of soup? But in the end I had a second bowl because I was concerned for myself.*

When it came to the food placed on the table, again I did not choose by what tastes good or what tastes bad, I aimed for the green vegetables because to me, guided by my concepts, this is healthy food. So I went first for the green vegetables and continued eating green vegetables only, until later on when I tried another dish which was the diced vegetables. Then I found out that it tasted very good. And then I realised that all the while I have been eating without wanting to know whether things tasted good or bad, but only what is important for me, and that is a new discovery for me.

When J. came to scoop up the diced vegetables I thrust my bowl in front of him and indicated he should scoop some for me. That was not because I had a desire to eat more of the diced vegetables but I felt that I wanted to be pampered. I knew I was a bit naughty but I wanted to be pampered as well, just like the way we pamper you.

GODWIN: Just a brief comment about living in a country like Hong Kong where there are lots of things that are available and plenty of them. An interesting exercise would be to discriminate between your real needs and your greed. I suppose this is how a meditator can function in a country where there is such consumerism.

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RETREATANT: *You gave us certain directions as to how we should eat. For example, we should feel grateful before we eat, how to watch for the taste, etc. At that time a thought arose in my mind, that is: It is suffering to do so many things before one eats. Then another thought arose, that you only told us to observe, not to stop from eating, so I became happy again. When I actually tasted the food and ate I began to understand that this is meditation. Meditation is part of our daily life. Meditation is to bring our attention to the present moment, the tasting, whether it is good or bad, whether it is*

pleasant or unpleasant. I realised that suffering and happiness can exist at the same time. There is a Chinese saying: When the suffering ends, some form of good will come. Then I reflected that after the experience of suffering, when you look back, then you can really say that you've learnt something.

GODWIN: That is real wisdom!

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GODWIN: I would like to share what a meditator shared with me. She said that before she was having the meal, before she started to eat, she felt grateful. And when she felt grateful she had what is called sympathetic joy, the quality of *Mudita*. It touched me deeply how this small quality, this little quality of feeling grateful before eating a meal can generate the feeling of sympathetic joy.

In all these experiences presented so far, each person saw something, realised something, experienced something, so that it really became a part of themselves. This is why on the first day I said that what will be attempted here is to develop some insights, some tools, so that when you discover them here and when you experience them for yourself, then it is just a matter of continuing with that in everyday life.

Now you are free to present any negative or unpleasant experiences because they can be equally important.

EXPERIENCES WITH EMOTIONS

RETREATANT: *During working meditation I went to cut the firewood. Whilst I was doing that I had an image of something that happened when I was young, because when I was young I lived in a place where we also had to use firewood for cooking. And then I thought about my mother. That also brought up a memory of the past and this was the most regrettable thing in my life. Once this image came to my mind, all the emotions like sadness and remorse arose. The emotions were so great that almost immediately tears welled up in my eyes. Now the connection between a thought and an emotion is clear to me, how the thought gives rise to emotion. It is very clear.*

GODWIN: Thank you very much for sharing that experience. I'm happy that you made a discovery through that experience.

RETREATANT: *The emotion was still with me when we came back from working meditation to this hall to meditate. I was still remembering this particular incident of the past. The tears continued to come during the meditation. As to how this emotion was eventually resolved: when I was still having this emotion and was still meditating, a bee came in and buzzed around me, and the bee somehow touched me and I was very scared. I was so scared that I got very nervous, my muscles tensed up, my heart beat increased, and then I discovered that this strong emotion overcame the other emotion of sadness. So I discovered that one emotion can be overcome by another, especially if they are both strong emotions. The strong emotion of the fear of being stung by the bee overcame the sadness.*

GODWIN: Maybe one comment arising from this is that sometimes experiences which we consider as negative, like the bee coming, can have positive effects. In a way the bee helped you to recover from the earlier emotion.

Maybe a further comment is that when we are affected by what we consider as a problem, as in this case, then as you rightly said, when another problem comes along the earlier problem dissolves.

Anyway, thank you, very interesting.

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RETREATANT: *Yesterday you told us to dig out our unpleasant memories, unpleasant recollections. After that meditation was over we all went out to do walking meditation and I observed that everyone who was doing walking meditation was looking very forlorn as though they were bankrupt, including myself. Then I recalled a very unhappy incident I had a while ago. Whilst this feeling of unhappiness continued I thought of the sensation of pain, and you had told us to treat pain just as a sensation and to be friendly towards negative feelings. But when I am really in pain, how can I be friendly to the pain?*

Whilst I was still pondering on this question, I somehow resolved it myself. Pain is there because we have certain attachments. Once there is pain one must deal with it, and if we observe the pain from a third person's point of view, as though one is not the person concerned, then the pain would lessen. When I tried this method, observing the pain as though I was a third person, I realised the pain does decrease and then I tried to catch hold of the pain again but I could not find it.

GODWIN: I'm so happy that you have been making this very important and deep discovery. This is exactly what I am trying to do - to create a kind of atmosphere and to give some suggestions so you make your own discoveries. And when you make your own discoveries, then you'll realise you have lots of self-confidence in handling such situations. And then when the same situations arise in everyday life you can use the same tools.

So what you have discovered is that when you identify yourself with pain then the pain becomes a problem, but when you dis-identify yourself, and as you put it so nicely, see it as a third person, then the pain is no longer such an intense problem.

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RETREATANT: *Yesterday you said we can allow both pleasant and unpleasant emotions to arise. On other days I tried this type of meditation as well and I found it really very helpful. When I practised this type of meditation yesterday, I waited the whole morning but not even one visitor came to my mind. Even by the afternoon when I had prepared tea for the visitors still the visitors did not come. For the whole day yesterday I found that I did not have any pleasant or unpleasant emotions. The only thing was waiting.*

GODWIN: Your experience yesterday was very important. This is one of the very interesting and important tools for working with unpleasant emotions, or even pleasant emotions. Not to fear them, but sometimes to wait for them to arise. And as it happened in your experience, when you are waiting, preparing for them to come, they don't come. On the other hand, if we fear that they will come then they are bound to come. But here when you are waiting for them to come, or even invite them, they don't come. That's a very important realisation.

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RETREATANT: *I had an unpleasant emotion, experience this morning. It was something that was very unpleasant for me but afterwards, when it was over, I was able to breathe for a moment and then I felt very calm instead. The point I would like to make is that now it is very clear to me how when I practise meditation I can feel so low one minute and then it is over; not that it never happened but there is not a trace left and I can feel joyous.*

GODWIN: So it shows that even if you have been meditating for a long time you cannot prevent such unpleasant experiences from arising. So please remember that. Please realise that. It is a very important point. What is important when such an unpleasant experience arises, is to learn not to be surprised by it, but to work with it and realise that it can go away. To use the simile of the sickness and the medicine, we are bound to fall sick in the sense of suffering. But what is important is that if you have discovered the medicine, then when the sickness arises you take the medicine.

THE MIRROR-LIKE MIND

Today I hope some of you discovered some tools for working with unpleasant emotions, and that you also discovered that there are times during the day when these emotions are absent, which is also very important. In this connection, a meditation master said something very interesting. He said we look for only what is wrong in us, we never look for what is right in us. So we should learn to be more and more positive and to be aware of our positive states of mind rather than only be concerned about negative states of mind.

Ideally, we can then go beyond the positive and the negative, which means we are open to both states of mind. This is related to the meditation technique that I presented which can be described as having a mirror-like mind, where we learn to reflect things just as they are. When something that is considered beautiful comes before a mirror it reflects that beautiful object just as it is. When something that is considered ugly comes before the mirror, again the mirror reflects it just as it is.

Vipassana meditation, that is insight or wisdom meditation, is developing such a mind where you learn to reflect things just as they are; and meditation of Samatha, calm and tranquillity, can be seen as polishing away the dust that is on the mirror. So when the mirror is polished very clear, applying this simile to our mind, then we can see very sharply and very clearly what arises in our mind, and hopefully learn to see things just as they are.

So this technique I presented today is extremely important, and what is also important is that it can be practised in everyday life. You don't have to have a particular posture, you don't have to close your eyes. You are merely aware of what is happening in your mind and body. Then in such situations in everyday life, if you are reacting, if you are having emotions, physical pain or mental pain you realise it and you see it just as it is, no minus. And in everyday life we can also have pleasant experiences and when we have pleasant experiences, positive experiences, just know it with awareness and reflect it just as it is.

NATURE AND THE DHAMMA

RETREATANT: *During the individual meditation session I was down by the sea near here and I was enjoying the scenery, the sea and the trees around, and then I noticed some rotten vines, and I thought to myself, this is spoiling the scene, because it was not pretty when all the other trees were green and pretty. Then I noticed discrimination arose in my mind. I was judging what was pretty, what was not. When I noticed how this liking and disliking arose, I thought to myself, what if there were no green and beautiful trees around me, but only rotten and dead trees? If that happened, would I be very unhappy? Would my inner world be dictated by external factors? Then I realised that this is all part of nature: as the Buddha said, everything that is formed has to die and this is just a natural cycle. The trees die and they sprout up again.*

If we really understand this principle, if we really understand the Dhamma, then even though there are scenes that we do not like it would really not affect us. And then I realised that just like those

trees, my body will die one day as well. If we really understand this teaching, if we really accept it, there would be no such thing as suffering at all. When I got to this stage of reflection I suddenly felt very relaxed, very happy.

Also just like J., while I was in the midst of reflection, a buzzing bee came around. I did not panic. Normally I am very afraid of bees but this time I did not react and the bee was very close to me so we were staring at each other eye to eye. And because I did not have fear, this time I looked the bee in the eye and noticed very clearly the colours of the bee. I could see its big round eyes and wings. That was a very interesting incident for me.

Because of this joyous feeling that arose in me during my reflection, I found that when I was in a state of joy little things that I used to be afraid of did not affect me. And if we accept nature as it is, we might understand the law of nature. Then even if everything around me has rotted and died, it should not affect me at all. I should still have this joyous state.

GODWIN: I would like to make a few comments.

The first thing is, what a lot we can learn from nature. So this point was brought out very well in your account about nature. The second point is how reflection, this reflecting kind of meditation, using thoughts creatively, can be extremely helpful to us. And the third point is, as you rightly said, depending on our state of mind, then we are in a position to handle whatever negative or unpleasant experience that we are faced with.

And maybe a fourth point is, when we have fear in relation to bees or anything else, we can never see their beauty. So because you did not have any fear you were able to see the beauty in a bee at that time.

And about the point of death and impermanence, I would like to mention that this is a very important topic to reflect on sometimes. In Buddhist meditation this reflection on death plays a very important role in the practice. In Sri Lanka, in forest meditation centres, when you visit such places you see skeletons being used by meditating monks to remind them of the fact of impermanence and the fact of death.

Death is the most certain thing in life, and what is unfortunate is that we forget the most certain thing in life and get involved in other things that are uncertain. But if you can be with this most certain thing in life, then when we encounter it, either in ourselves or in others, it doesn't affect us in the same way.

And as you rightly realised, in nature you get death and life existing together. They are not separate. They are inter-related, inter-connected. This is how we should see life and death. Not to see them as separate but to see how they are connected, inter-related. Then ideally, whether you live or die it makes no difference. Then you know the way to live and you know the way to die.

WORRIES AND FEARS

RETREATANT: *I want to talk about the things that can be brought about by worrying. At 6 p.m. this evening I went over to the temple just in front of this place to visit a monk who is a friend of mine and I did not get back here until 6:30. Then a thought arose because it was getting darker and darker very quickly at that time, and I was a bit worried because I did not have a torch and there were no street lamps, and what if something happened? It was not really totally dark, I could still see the road at that time, but there was this protracted worry: What if something happens? Then I realised that the best*

thing to do was to walk more quickly and get back to this place rather than worry about something that might happen in the future.

GODWIN: Very good.

RETREATANT: *Actually I had a similar experience yesterday when I went for a walk during the outdoor meditation not far from here, because I never go too far by myself. When I went a bit further from the nunnery here, there were rustling noises behind the trees. They sounded like human footsteps running towards me, running very fast towards me. I was dead scared because I thought it was some illegal immigrants or whatever, somebody was aiming at me and I was on my own. But I stood still and looked because I could not run away faster than a man anyway, if it was a man. So I stood still and looked through the trees to try to find out whether it was a man or just falling leaves. I could not see anything, but the footsteps kept running towards me and then they stopped but I could not see anything. Then I stood still and eventually saw a dog coming out! And there I was having all sorts of thoughts of being hurt by someone else.*

RETREATANT: *A lot of suffering and worries are created by the imagination.*

RETREATANT: *By thoughts, because I was thinking of a human being. A human being who will do some harm to me.*

RETREATANT: *I think her fear had some foundation. It could be that somebody was trying to do her harm. It's possible.*

GODWIN: But in this particular incident she found it was not so. I think there can be rational fear and irrational fear. So it is very important to know the difference. Supposing you knew very well that there were people around at that time, having such a fear could be considered rational because it has an actual basis. But irrational fear is, as we have been discussing, related to the imagination and thoughts creating the fear. It has no basis whatsoever.

There is an interesting text in which the Buddha describes how he worked with fear before he became enlightened. So he was meditating in the forest. And then when he would do walking meditation in the night, because of the sounds he heard, he would have certain fears arising in his mind. And it says in the text that whatever posture he was meditating in when fear arose, he would not change the posture. So if he was doing walking meditation, while walking, without running, he would watch, observe and confront that fear, try to understand that fear and work it through.

In the experience that you presented, supposing you had started to run, you would have imagined the footsteps following you and you would have got more and more fear and you might have even panicked. So as the Bodhisatta did, what you did was also the same. And not panicking, not running, staying there and exploring and investigating, you made a profound discovery.

RETREATANT: *I want to know about how to deal with fear. In the case of a bee, should we just stand there and work with the fear or walk away, since there are two possibilities? It might really sting you or it might not. So how do we distinguish between the rational fear and imaginative fear?*

GODWIN: Very good question. So in the case of Prince Siddhattha, as there was not something objectively apparent one can pause and try to find out whether this fear is

imaginary or whether it is a factual fear. But in the case of the bee, it is a fact that there is a bee buzzing around you; it is not imagination. So as it is a fact, then we have to act.

Sometimes I think it is helpful to draw this distinction. In parts of Sri Lanka there is a war going on. And when travelling in places where there is a war naturally the fear has a basis. But if a person does not face that kind of situation and yet starts to imagine that walking in the streets of Kandy he might get killed, even though in Kandy there is no war, such a person will never go out of his or her house.

Another difference is that in the case of irrational fear we have a chance to work with it. This is the important thing for us as meditators. We can see very clearly, as it was mentioned, how thoughts can create stories. A very important discovery to make. So sometimes it is just an innocent thought that comes and then you start imagining; and how this can even result in your panicking is a very important realisation. It is important to see how from one condition arising there is a vicious circle activated in the creation of fear. In the case of rational fear you know that there is an objective fact and that is the end of it, that is it. But in a way, S. is right. The impact it has on the person, whether it is rational or irrational is the same.

So with meditation, with awareness, we might be able to make these discoveries. And what is also important is to work with our fear in this way.

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

GODWIN: I would like to suggest that we will try to use what the Buddha discovered when he became enlightened. What he discovered for suffering humanity is the Four Noble Truths. And what is very powerful in this is that we can use it in any situation: we can use it when we are meditating and we can use it in everyday life.

In talking about the Four Noble Truths sometimes I like to use the medical model: sickness, cause of the sickness, cure and the medicine. So what I have been hearing about your experiences makes me believe that the medicine is working. In a way meditation can be seen as discovering the medicine for the sickness that we create ourselves. So to use it in a practical way, today when you are meditating or whatever you are doing, whenever there is suffering don't give it a minus, don't feel bad about it but see: I am experiencing what the Buddha called the First Noble Truth. He called it noble because it is only when we suffer that we can find a way out of suffering. It is only when we are sick that we feel the need to find the medicine. So today, in any situation where there is suffering just see it as the First Noble Truth. And I think this is a very interesting way of relating to suffering because we are learning to see the Dhamma in the suffering.

But the Second Noble Truth is more difficult than the First Noble Truth, where you have to see that you are creating the suffering yourself by the images you have, by the models you have, by the expectations you have. This is where one has to see very clearly, to see your own expectations, to see your own models, to see your own images. To see what it is that you are resisting in relation to what is happening. Even while we are meditating we can use this. So when you are meditating and when you are suffering for some reason, then you can investigate immediately what you are expecting, what you are wanting, what you are demanding.

And I would like to suggest a positive way of using the Four Noble Truths, especially the last two. So if you constantly observe what is happening then you will realise: at this

moment there is no suffering, there is no reaction, there is nothing that I am resisting. Then it would also be interesting to find out, why is there no suffering now? Then you will realise: Ah, I am accepting things just as they are now and therefore there is no suffering.

So I would like to suggest that today let us really make an effort, in every situation, to use the Buddha's very deep and profound but simple discovery, and then see how these Four Noble Truths can become a part of our life. Then in everyday life we can use the Four Noble Truths in the same way.

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RETREATANT: *I just want to take this opportunity to add something interesting regarding the Four Noble Truths. I have a short story to tell. I have a female colleague in my office and one day I talked to her about the Four Noble Truths. She has no religion. And after I told her about the Four Noble Truths, what they mean and what I am practising, do you know what her response was? She said it is not necessary for her to practise Buddhism since she really enjoys suffering. She said sometimes life has suffering, but when the suffering is gone the happiness comes. And that life is a wave, sometimes a calm wave, sometimes a down wave, that is the way life is. She said that that is the taste of life so why do I want to get rid of the suffering?*

GODWIN: So it is interesting that there are people with different philosophies, different views! There is an interesting Buddhist text which speaks about 62 views, 62 suppositions, during the Buddha's time. And when you go through those 62 views, I'm sure some of the views that people have at present can be identified amongst those 62 views. And I think people are entitled to their views, why not? So your colleague takes up that position, but someone else takes up the position that when he or she really feels suffering, he or she wants to find a way out of suffering. That is where the Buddha's teaching is relevant.

A friend of mine was a Professor in a University. He said: I'm always happy, I don't have to practise anything. He had money; he had good health; he had a good family. So in a way he was very happy and contented. Suddenly he had a heart attack and he fell sick. What a difference it made to him! He became so sad, so depressed. He had lots of fear of death and dying. It was so sad, tragic to see that man in that condition. So it's only when one encounters such suffering that one can really see suffering and all its implications.

In such a situation if someone were to go to him and say: Would you like to find a way out of your suffering? naturally he would say: Please, please tell me. So we can be living in a world that we have created which does not correspond to reality, a kind of dream world, and then in real life when that world is shattered, that is when you see reality. And when that happens, sometimes it is too late. So this is the importance of the practice. When we start practising, one aspect of the practice is that we are preparing our minds for any situation in life. Then we will never be taken unawares. So this is my response to people who follow that philosophy.

OPENING TO SUFFERING

RETREATANT: Why is it that suffering is so difficult to bear, that suffering is so tremendous, that suffering makes us unable to open our mind, thereby resulting in the big wheel of Kamma?

GODWIN: So I'll answer that question. The question is very nicely put. Why do we find it difficult to bear suffering? Why aren't we more open to suffering? A simple response is that

we are surprised when there is suffering. But we should not be surprised, because we are still not enlightened, and naturally as we are not enlightened we are bound to suffer. We should be surprised if there was no suffering! And when we are surprised what happens? We give it a big minus. Only I suffer. No one else suffers in the way that I am suffering, and I know in my life I will continue to suffer. So we can create a big story out of the suffering that we are having. In this situation how can we be open, how can we not be affected when there is suffering? So this is the beauty of the Buddha's teaching if you can see suffering as a Noble Truth.

I'd like to offer a very interesting tool. You should wait with an open mind thinking: Let me experience the First Noble Truth of the Buddha. So unlike in the past, not being closed to suffering, but waiting for suffering to arise. One thing is, as we found out, that when we are really open to suffering it doesn't arise!

The second point is: when we are being open to suffering, waiting for it to arise, then we are not surprised by it. And when suffering does arise if you can say: Very interesting; I'm very grateful because now that it has come I can work with it. Please try this tool and see what a difference it makes when suffering comes. To put it in another way, now we see it as something extremely negative, but in the way that I am suggesting it is something very positive. And if you can, at that moment ask yourself the question: What can I learn from this suffering? In what way can I use the Buddha's tools? In what way can I use the Buddha's medicine in working with this situation?

And this brings up, as I said, the Second Noble Truth. Here you will see very clearly that suffering is due to this idea you have that something that is happening should not happen. So if you can develop this positive attitude you will be really open to suffering. And then you can really make use of suffering to find a way out of suffering. So it is simply changing your attitude towards suffering. When you change the attitude you see suffering in an entirely different way.

RETREATANT: *Can I share an experience about suffering?*

Sometimes when I meditate and when pain arises in my legs I get frustrated and agitated also. I would try to escape from the situation by thinking: Shall I release my legs? And the more I think about how to escape from the pain, the more agitated I get. I recall an incident a few years ago when I had an accident and hurt my leg badly. On that particular occasion I accepted the fact that I had hurt my leg and therefore my leg was in pain. So I just allowed the pain to go on for the whole night and I did not suffer from the pain because I accepted the situation as it was. When I look back to this incident, I find that it is the trying to escape from the situation that causes the suffering. And if there is no escape, then pain is just pain, sensation is just sensation.

GODWIN: Very good.

RETREATANT: *I can only do it sometimes.*

GODWIN: All of us are like that. But what is important in such experiences is that at least you have a glimpse, a realisation, of what can be done when there is physical pain. So this is a very important insight. It's a very important experience. And it shows that the Dhamma, the medicine, really helps. If you can really use the medicine, it always helps us.

RETREATANT: *And I also want to emphasise that this also applies to mental suffering. If we do not try to escape from mental suffering it is not that painful sometimes.*

GODWIN: Very important point, because it shows that when there is physical pain, accepting it, working with it as a sensation and so on, you'll realise the physical pain is there but it is not a source of suffering. In fact I was discussing this with P. You can have mental suffering, certain defilements like maybe greed, maybe anger, maybe fear, and all these things. So as with physical pain, if you can learn not to identify yourself with that mental pain, if you can really use the idea of no-self, that there is no-one really owning that state of mind, then those defilements or those negative things will be there but you'll be relating to them in an entirely different way.

In the Buddhist tradition normally it is understood that it is only when these things are completely absent that we can be truly free from suffering. That seems to be a goal that is not easy to reach, but if you can see mental pain and physical pain in this way then it is within the reach of all of us. So this again shows it is not what is happening but how we relate to it that makes all the difference. Maybe that is why in the same tradition it is said the ordinary mind is the enlightened mind.

So I hope that in everyday life when you have physical pain and mental pain, if you have discovered the tools, if you have discovered the medicine, to a great extent you may be experiencing the pain but not suffering as much.

And what is important is that when you have such experiences you develop self-confidence. It also means having trust and confidence in the medicine and the Buddha who discovered the medicine. So when you have this self-confidence, when you have this trust, when you have this self-reliance, then anything can arise but you know what to do about it.

RETREATANT: *This afternoon, during the outdoor meditation session, I was practising observation of suffering as you told us to. I was reflecting on the Four Noble Truths and when I thought of suffering I somehow felt helpless because it seems that I am always drawn into the suffering itself. When I felt this rather negative emotion arising, then I remembered that I am my own best friend. So I said, well, if I am my own best friend, I should share my sorrows with my best friend. Then I found my best friend, myself, did not know what to do either! My best friend is also confused! So helplessly I said to myself, let us sit down and have a think. While I sat down with my best friend, I began to laugh at this notion and then I told myself: Well, there is no need to worry about the future. We are always trying to think of how to get out of suffering in the future, why bother thinking about that now?*

ANICCA AND ANATTA

GODWIN: So then we might try to work on two very important aspects of the Buddha's teaching which some of you have already been experiencing. In discovering the medicine and using the medicine these are two powerful aspects of the Buddha's teaching, which are the fact of change or impermanence, and the fact of no-self. So today we will as far as possible try to work with these two very important aspects of the Buddha's teaching.

We need to be open to any change that may arise physically and mentally and even externally. If we insist that change should only take place according to our own idea, then when there is change which does not correspond to that idea it leads to suffering. But by realising that this is the nature of existence, that it changes and that we have no control over

change, then we can be open to change in whatever form it arises, internally or externally, and this will result in freedom.

And according to the Buddha, this fact of change and impermanence and this idea of no-self are very well inter-connected, inter-related. He has a very interesting argument. If we own things, if there really is an ego, a self, then we should be able to order things: Now things should happen in this way, according to my ideas. But as there is no self, no ego, we cannot do that. So therefore we have to see from the fact of change that there is no self-identity, no agent, only the process of change itself.

It is interesting that whenever there is suffering, there is suffering because you want things your way, and this *your way* or *my way* is the result of the feeling that you are *Somebody*. So whenever we are suffering, just find out what is the idea, what is the model that you are holding onto which is now being challenged. It is always some idea of how it should be, how it must be according to the ideas the self has.

Now what happens is that because of this sense of self we have images, models, of how things should be according to *my way*. It is always *my way*. Naturally in everyday life things don't always happen according to *my way*. That is how suffering is created in everyday life, with this idea of *my way*. So whenever you are suffering in everyday life, you can try to find out: what has been my idea, what has been my view of how things should be? Then you'll realise how this sense of self is directly related to the suffering that you are experiencing. So in this simple, practical way you can work with this idea of *my way* and then when that *my way* is not there, when there is emptiness, notice how there is an absence of suffering.

Another way of saying the same thing is that with this sense of self that we have we feel that we are *Somebody*. Here again suffering and unpleasant emotions arise with this idea, with this concept that you are *Somebody*. I will give a few practical examples. So with this feeling of *Somebody* we would like others to behave according to the idea this *Somebody* has. And then naturally when others don't behave in this way this is why we get angry. So you see the direct connection between this idea of *Somebody*, this sense of self, and getting angry.

And how does this feeling of *Somebody* cause fear to arise? What is the connection? So here, when *Somebody* is threatened, when this *Somebody* feels that something might happen to me, that I am in danger, that is how fear comes.

How does this feeling of *Somebody* generate anxiety about the future? So with this feeling of *Somebody*, you feel that in the future everything should go according to the idea this *Somebody* has. And if you are uncertain about that, then this is how anxieties arise.

So these are some simple, practical examples, how this idea of *Somebody* is related to self, and how suffering and these negative emotions arise. No-self or emptiness is when *Somebody* becomes a *Nobody*!

And as tomorrow and the day after are the last two days we have, we will try to focus more and more on our everyday practice, our everyday life. So tomorrow and the day after we will discuss all the problems and all the difficulties you have to encounter in everyday life, and let us see how far the tools that we have been discussing, the tools that we have been practising with, can be used in everyday life.

It is easy to take the medicine here while we are on retreat and it is easy to see the benefits of the medicine here. But what is more important is how we can take the medicine back to Hong Kong in our everyday lives.

LIVING THE DHAMMA

GODWIN: The topic today is how to use the medicine in everyday life. So what are your questions?

RETREATANT: *I have reflected on how to apply the tools that I have learnt in daily life but there are still one or two things I cannot find a solution to. For example, in the office I have to have expectations regarding what my colleagues do. Just one practical example: I asked one of my colleagues to send a letter to a certain place. My colleague has done that many times, hundreds of times before, so I expected this colleague to do the same this time.*

Occasionally people make mistakes, and a mistake is a mistake. But when I found out that this job was not done properly, which is a very simple job, then I found myself immediately getting agitated because when I assigned the job to my colleague I had this expectation that it's a very simple assignment, there should be no problem and my colleague would be able to handle it.

What I find is that after practising all these years I can recover from my agitation very quickly because I quickly understand that every human being makes mistakes. When I make a mistake myself, I really wish that somebody will forgive me. So when somebody else makes a mistake I had better forgive him. But still the expectation is there because it is my job. So in that situation, do you have any suggestion?

GODWIN: I like such practical situations. So a few suggestions. One is: it is O.K. to have expectations because it is quite natural to have such expectations, but realise that having expectations is one thing, reality is another thing.

The second suggestion is that when such a thing happens, learn not to be surprised. Because we have to deal with human beings who can be forgetful and we have also to deal with human beings who are not so responsible. We should be surprised only if we find someone who is perfect! But there are no people who *never* forget and are *always* responsible. We should remember that we are living in a world of imperfect human beings.

Another suggestion, which is very important, is that you must show that you are a cobra. But you must learn to play it like a game. You must say to yourself: Now I'm going to call this man who has forgotten to attend to this very important letter and I am going to speak to him very firmly, in a very tough way. You should know very well you only pretending; you are consciously doing it but inside you have no hatred towards him. Some people only understand such language. So you can state really firmly that next time you do such a thing I will reduce your salary!

Another interesting suggestion is to try to have a dialogue with that person. It's a very interesting exercise just to raise questions in such a situation. Now tell me: What happened to you? Why did you forget? Is it because you were not really interested, or you had other more important things to remember? Are you normally forgetful? Just get him to reflect on what has happened. So it enables that person to reflect on his own actions. This can sometimes be extremely helpful and it can reveal to him something that he might not have looked at before.

So I wish you the best of luck.

MINDFULNESS

RETREATANT: *Is it right to say that mindfulness is the secret ingredient, because you have given us the tools, and mindfulness then is the tool that enables us to remember that we have these other tools. Is that accurate?*

GODWIN: As the Buddha said: Mindfulness or awareness is the only way. So with mindfulness we can investigate, we can explore. And this is how one can use mindfulness for exploration. There is a very interesting text which brings out the connection between mindfulness or awareness and wisdom. So awareness is compared to the surgeon's probe, probing the wound or area the surgeon has to operate on. And the surgeon's scalpel which is used to remove that wound or whatever the surgeon wants removed is compared to insight or wisdom. So with awareness you can probe, and with insight or wisdom, you can cut it out. To take a simple example, when you are angry you can try to explore why you are angry. Then you'll realise: I'm angry because I am demanding how things should be. Then when you see the problem is with you, wisdom or insight arises immediately. This sounds very simple but really this is the teaching.

RETREATANT: *That was part of the reason why I asked, because I notice from my life that the longer the gaps are between the times I apply mindfulness, the harder it is to do so. So it seems a shame that I have the tools but never use them.*

GODWIN: It is interesting that one meaning of *sati*, mindfulness, is recollecting and remembering. So we have to remember. If you are sick and if the medicine bottle is there but you have forgotten to take the medicine, you can't be healed. So you have to remember to take the medicine at the right time. And I must say, sometimes the medicine in this practice is not very sweet. The medicine is not always pleasant, as you know. There are some medicines which are not sweet at all, not tasty at all, but sometimes such medicines can be very powerful. Like an injection: it is very unpleasant but it can work very quickly.

CONCLUSION

GODWIN: Usually in retreats I try to give talks on different themes in the Dhamma. But in this retreat it just happened that I have been inviting people to share their experiences and it has been such an inspiring experience for me and I am sure also for others. And it has been also a learning experience for me, to see what I can learn from these experiences, these insights, these discoveries about the Dhamma. It brings out the beauty of the Buddha's teaching. So we should all be grateful that we have been able to discover the Buddha's teaching, and I think it is also a good practice to feel grateful for the Buddha. One meditation that people in some traditional Buddhist countries practise is to reflect on the Buddha's good qualities. Sometimes this can be a very powerful and inspiring experience: to reflect on the depth and the wisdom and the loving-kindness of the Buddha, and how these come through in the teaching.

So in conclusion I am very happy that you are already discovering the medicine and I really hope that you will continue to make discoveries about the medicine so when sicknesses arise, either here or in everyday life, then you can use the medicine.