

GODWIN SAMARARATNE

MEDITATION FOR EVERYDAY LIFE

GODWIN'S RETREAT TALKS AT THE WALDHAUS, GERMANY

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DAY 1: AWARENESS

SCHEDULE

GODWIN: First we will go over the schedule, and then touch on some aspects of meditation. So at 6 o'clock there is a wake-up bell. Is this very early by German standards? Not early? By Sri Lanka standards it is very late! So, when you hear the wake-up bell, that is the time to start your meditation. To observe what is happening in your mind when you hear the bell. Do you feel happy? Do you feel unhappy? Maybe when you go to the toilet, there will be someone inside the toilet. How do you see that? How do you relate to that? Will you become impatient? Or can you have loving-kindness to the person who is inside the toilet? This is the practice.

And then we start the day with bodywork. The idea of bodywork is to wake up physically and mentally. So, Paul will be doing the bodywork and I know that we work together very well, combining bodywork with meditation. I know that this bodywork has been very much appreciated. So I am happy that we have agreed to do bodywork this time also. After that there will be a session of meditation, and then there will be breakfast.

EATING

Eating can also be a very important meditation. What happens in our minds when we eat? How far can we be present? How far can we observe what is happening in our minds when we are eating? We may have our likes and our dislikes. So, just get to know them, just observe them. And I like to emphasise three aspects in relation to eating: one is chewing our food. I think we hardly chew our food. We don't make a conscious effort to eat slowly. And to know what exactly it means to taste or chew. So, chewing our food, tasting our food are very important aspects. And about tasting your food, I would like you to experiment, at what point do you really taste your food? Maybe in the evening discussion we can go into that aspect.

Another thing is, we make decisions when we eat. Sometimes very important decisions. What are the decisions we make when we eat? What am I eating here? Because we have a lot of choices. So when you have choices you make decisions. Am I going to take Sri Lankan tea or am I going to take coffee? And then with coffee also, you have the different varieties. Are you going to take butter or are you going to take cheese? So we make these decisions, but we make the decisions mechanically. So when you eat and when you make decisions, please be conscious: Now I am going to do this. And then sometimes we ask ourselves: Now should I go and get some more bread? Then you should know: Now I have decided to get more bread.

Another important aspect to look at in relation to eating is the quantity of food. And according to the Buddha there are two extremes to be avoided. One is eating too much and the other is eating too little. So now, how does one find out whether you are avoiding these two extremes? Interesting question. It is by learning to listen to your body, listen to your stomach! So, while eating it is very, very important to learn just to be conscious of what is happening in your body.

Now Paul said something about loving-kindness. It can help to get visas, it can help to go through borders. I am emphasising this very strongly in this retreat. So when we eat – and

we will eat in silence – how can you have loving-kindness while eating? For the whole retreat will be in silence: how can one have loving-kindness in silence? In some retreats you are asked to avoid eye contact, not to look at other people. But, I would like to suggest to have eye contact and to see whether one can make an effort to make contact with others, but in complete silence. And if you can have the openness of loving-kindness you will also be able to help

the others around you. So please make an effort to make a connection with others in this way and also to have that feeling of loving-kindness to those who are around you. These are some aspects of eating meditation.

WORKING MEDITATION

Then there is what is called working meditation after breakfast. Working meditation is very important, because it is one way of integrating meditation with daily life. I was in a Zen centre in Hong Kong and when I went there I saw the monks and the nuns: most of the time they were working. I was introduced to the teacher and I asked the teacher: Don't you meditate, don't you do some sitting meditation? He looked at me and said: This is what meditation is. And he said something very interesting: By working meditation we are trying to develop *parami* – the *parami* are qualities of perfection.

So what are the qualities of perfection you can develop while doing working meditation? One important aspect of working meditation, a quality that you can develop, is again loving-kindness. So, when you work in the kitchen; can you do that work with loving-kindness, and have the thought: May the meditators who are eating enjoy the food that I am preparing? If you are washing the toilet, while washing the toilet you can think: May the persons who are using the toilet experience some joy and happiness. These are small things, simple things. But if you can have this concern while working and care for the other spiritual friends around you, this is the way we can develop these *parami*, these qualities of perfection.

FORMAL MEDITATION

So, after working meditation there is again a session of meditation. We will be meditating in three postures: sitting, standing and walking. Then there is a time for individual and outdoor meditation. So, I would like to say something about this. One thing is, we should learn to make a relationship with ourselves. And the phrase that I often use is: learning to be your best friend. What happens when we are alone with ourselves? Very soon we become bored with ourselves and we feel lonely by ourselves. What does this show? It shows, that we cannot enjoy our own company, that we can stand ourselves only for a few minutes. After that we get tired of ourselves. It shows how little connection we have with ourselves. So, when you are alone, see if it is possible to make a connection with yourself, and as I said, to feel that you are your own best friend. And if that connection is made, then you learn to enjoy your own company. So, this is a very important aspect of individual and outdoor meditation.

Another aspect is learning to develop sensitivity to nature. We are very fortunate that we are living in very beautiful surroundings. I would like to emphasise very much the importance of awakening our senses. According to Buddhist psychology we have 6 senses and one of the senses is thinking. So most of the time we use only one sense: thinking, thoughts. I would like to emphasise that you should please make an effort to develop especially the

DAY 1: AWARENESS

sense of seeing, the art of looking at things, the art of looking at a tree, looking at a plant, a flower, looking at the sky. And then the art of listening, listening to the sounds. And, it is possible that there will be moments when there are no sounds. When exercising the art of looking, the art of hearing, and the art of feeling, please try to reduce concepts, words, and thoughts, and allow these senses to waken up.

Another aspect of individual and outdoor meditation which I emphasise very much is learning to experiment by yourself; exploring, learning, discovering by yourself. I often say that we are very fortunate to have this mind and body. Without taking anything for granted, just learn to discover. So there are many areas that we can learn about concerning the mind: the area of thoughts, the area of emotions, and what happens when you see something external.

Another aspect of individual and outdoor meditation would be to develop the quality of reflection. Sometimes I might suggest certain themes for you to reflect on. So, these are some aspects of individual and outdoor meditation.

And then there will be lunch, after lunch there will be a break, a period of rest, and there will be meditation followed by bodywork; another session of individual and outdoor meditation, and then the evening meal. After the meal there will be a short sitting and then we will have a discussion before we do some chanting – it can be very beautiful for a group to chant together. After chanting we will end the day by doing meditation of loving-kindness.

It is very interesting that the meditation of loving-kindness has many benefits. According to the texts, they say: there are 11 benefits of loving-kindness. It is interesting that three are related to sleep. One is, that you sleep peacefully. Now sleeping peacefully is not sleeping soundly. You can sleep soundly, you can start talking, you can start snoring, you can start moving, but sleeping peacefully is something entirely different. So, when you end the day with loving-kindness, you can fall asleep with loving-kindness, then you sleep peacefully. And the other effect relating to that is very interesting: you don't see unpleasant dreams, you don't see nightmares. This is another aspect of sleeping peacefully. And then, you wake up peacefully. This is why we will be ending the day with meditation of loving-kindness.

So, now any questions about the schedule, about what I have been saying? And those, who are unable to follow English: Is there anything that was not clear about what I have been saying. You can ask Paul and he will explain.

SILENCE

I would like to say something about silence. Why is silence emphasised in meditation? One thing is, I would like you to discover the connection between silence and awareness. So please find out for yourselves whether there is a relationship between silence and awareness. Another is, silence can create a lot of space in our mind. So, try to enjoy the space that silence may create in our minds.

It is interesting that in English the letters that we use for the words listen and silence are the same. It shows that there is a connection between listening and being silent. So if you can be silent, you can listen. And what are the things that we can listen to when we are silent? One thing: you can listen to the sounds around us. If we start to speak it will not be possible to hear the sounds. And what is more important is, you can also learn to listen to yourselves.

DAY 1: AWARENESS

Someone has defined meditation as learning to listen to life. Can we listen to our thoughts and can we listen to our emotions? This is a very important skill to learn: just to listen to our emotions. Can we listen to our body? So, with more and more silence we will be learning to listen to what is happening outside and we will also be learning to listen more and more to what is happening inside.

Silence does not mean that you will not be relating to the people around you. Normally we speak, we communicate with other people verbally, through speech. See whether you can have a deeper communication in silence and with loving-kindness. Just try this experiment.

So I would like to suggest that we do a short sitting now. (There follows a short meditation period).

AWARENESS

Today what we are trying to do is to practice awareness, mindfulness. So, let us explore the question: Why is awareness or mindfulness emphasised so much in meditation? And I would like to also hear from you, what you have experienced today, what you might have discovered today about awareness. (Nobody speaks). I see you are practising noble silence!

RETREATANT: *Should I label the sound or should I say this is a noise?*

GODWIN: Please do not say that is a noise, just say it is sound. There is an important difference between sound and noise.

RETREATANT: *Why did I have tension in meditation while concentrating?*

GODWIN: That is because it is the first day today and tomorrow it shouldn't be there.

GODWIN: I will try to touch on some aspects of why awareness is so important. One is that without awareness we will be like machines, mechanical, automatic, just reacting. I think in this modern world, maybe because of more and more mechanisation, this is what is happening to human beings. They are functioning very effectively like machines. But the danger is, the machines do not know what they are doing. So, this is one aspect of being mechanical. Another aspect of being mechanical is: machines don't have feelings. And this is also happening to human beings. So, this is why also today I have been emphasising very much the need to feel. With awareness we learn not to be mechanical, not to be habitual, but to be conscious and to know what is happening. And as I was saying: awareness helps us to feel.

Another aspect of awareness is – and it is possible that some of you might have the have had a glimpse of this for a few minutes – where you have the experience of the present moment, the here and now. It is interesting when we experience the present moment that we realise, that most of the time in our life and throughout the day, we are either in the past recalling things or we are in the future anticipating things. Just reflect on this aspect, that we are most of the time with something that cannot be changed because it is past or we are with something that has not happened yet. And it is precisely because of this that problems arise. In fact, suffering or emotions mostly arise when we are recalling or when we are anticipating. So, moments of being aware are in a way considered as moments of freedom.

But a question arises: is it possible for us to function while always being in the present? Because if you forget your past, you will not be able to go back home. You will not be able to

recognise people. And you will not be able to use a language. And if you do not think about the future, you will not be here because you have to do some planning. Not only you, even I would not be here because we have a lot to plan for the visa! So, the question is: how to use the past and the future without creating problems, without creating suffering?

So here we have to learn that when we think about the past, when we think about the future, we do it *now*. To take a simple example: let us think of the evening meal that we have had. When we think about the evening meal we do it *now*. Let us think of breakfast tomorrow – we can think of tomorrow morning's breakfast *now*. So, if we can realise that when we think of the past, all the problems we have had, all the difficulties we have had, then we can think: I am being here now and I am just recalling what has happened, which I do not experience now, which is not the reality now. And when we think of breakfast, we realise that breakfast is not now, but thinking of the breakfast is now, so then the power we have given to it, perhaps the greed that might come is less.

So ideally, you will be able to use the past functionally, and you will be able to plan very creatively, functionally, but not allow the past and the future to create all these emotions and this suffering. When we plan we have this thought: Will the plan be all right, will it work? Then, when we are eating we are thinking of the plan, when we are going for a walk we cannot see the tree, because we are thinking of the plan. Sometimes we cannot go to sleep, because we are thinking about the plan for tomorrow. So this is the problem. Can we consciously, with awareness, think now that I want to plan and then: that's it!

Another important aspect of awareness is that with awareness we can know what is happening in our mind and body. And as I emphasised yesterday, we can start exploring, we can start investigating, we can learn, we can find out, we can discover. In this way, we can learn, we can investigate, we can discover about anything in our life. It can be your sickness, it can be the sickness of another person, it can be your death, it can be your anger, it can be the fact of getting hurt, or even it can be a tension that you have in relation to a situation. So like this we can learn from anything and we can make discoveries about anything, using awareness and then exploring.

The Buddha in one text makes this point in the form of a simile. He says that awareness is like a surgeon's scalpel, and the surgeon is operating on a wound with this instrument to find out where the source of the injury is. So, with awareness you probe, you inquire, you find out, and then with the scalpel, the surgeon's knife, you cut it off, you remove it. The Buddha says: With awareness you can investigate and with understanding and wisdom you can cut it off.

So we will take a practical example which we can all relate to. Supposing we have become angry. With awareness we explore: why am I angry? Then you realise, you have the insight: I am getting angry because I have an expectation, an idea how the other person should behave. So when you realise that the problem is with *you*, and if you can bring awareness to that anger, with this realisation, the anger will drop away on its own after some time.

AWARENESS & EMOTIONS

Another point is, how to use awareness working with emotions. One day I will speak about emotions, especially unpleasant emotions, because this is the greatest problem we have in everyday life. So I will be offering more tools on that day, but just for today: one can use awareness to work with emotions in this way.

So we will discuss the emotion of anger: how, when there is anger, one can use awareness in another way. Normally we do two things when we are visited by any emotion like anger. If you are a meditator, you might try to repress it or control it. You might try to push it away or you might even pretend not to have it. And if you are not a meditator you might express the anger by throwing a plate!

So, in most situations we either repress or we express. It is very important, using awareness, not to repress it, not to express it, just to be aware of that anger, just being with it. If it stays, let it stay, if it goes away, let it go away. You just be with the anger. And what is important is, learning not to react to the anger with anger. I know these things sound so simple, but the Dhamma, the Teaching, is simple, not complicated.

AWARENESS & BEING ALIVE

Another aspect of awareness – I hope you might have had a glimpse of this aspect of awareness – you can see things very sharply, very clearly, as if for the first time, as I said a few times during practice today. So when you can experience things in this way you really start to be alive, you start to be awake.

We can really learn from children. You have to just watch a child. When the child sees something, how the eyes open, and the curiosity, and how the child is completely present. It can be a simple thing like a flower, anything can really make a child be simply present, just being alive with that seeing, hearing. We all had this beautiful quality of a child, a child-like me. When we are grown up we have lost this beautiful quality. So this is why I have been encouraging you to develop that quality, to awaken your senses in relation to nature.

We can really use nature in this way, as I was saying this morning, to awaken our senses. Generally speaking human beings use only one of the senses: our intellect, our thinking. Sometimes I meet people who really live only in their heads with their thoughts, with the intellect. So this is why it is also important that we should do this bodywork, so that we can forget our head, what we carry in our head, and feel our body, be conscious of the body. Also we should try to cultivate the other senses. Now I think we are really neglecting the sense of smell.

We are very fortunate to live in these beautiful surroundings. I would like to emphasise this, so please make an effort to develop our senses, especially the sense of seeing, the sense of hearing, and the sense of feeling. And if you can live in this way even for a few minutes, you can realise that you really become alive, you really become awake, you really start to start living again. In the Dhamma there is a very important book, called the Dhammapada. It has some very interesting verses or poems. And there is a verse there that says if you are not aware you are like a dead person.

Another aspect of awareness is when we learn to observe, when we learn to observe even little things, small things that we normally take for granted. And when we learn to see and observe these things externally, the small things, the little things, then we might also learn to see things in ourselves, which we normally don't look at, which we take for granted. This is why in regard to meditation the *Satipatthanasutta* says: Internally and externally. When there is awareness in relation to external things, you learn to be aware of internal things, and when you learn to be aware of internal things, you learn to be aware of external things.

So again, what is happening to modern man for different reasons is, we are really denying our senses and using only a fragment of our mind, the intellect. Certainly intellect, thinking has a place, but what has happened is that this fragment has been given undue importance. In this connection a very interesting book has been written called Emotional Intelligence. Does anyone know this book? It was written by a Buddhist, Daniel Goleman, although he does not say he is a Buddhist. It has become a best-seller.

And the point he makes is, that there is an emphasis of high IQ but what is important is not so much high IQ but high EQ, emotional intelligence. Since he wrote this book, in America and in other places in the world, they are teaching children how to work with their emotions. Not to develop only the IQ and the intelligence, but to develop intelligence and insight in working with our emotions.

AWARENESS & MORALITY

Another aspect of awareness is, that it can help us to develop a discipline, a morality, an ethical way of behaviour. Again in the Dhamma they attach a very great importance to what is called *sila*. *Sila* means a skilful way of living, a holy way of living, a way of living where you don't inflict suffering on yourself or suffering on others. So that even while you are here, if you have awareness, naturally you will be behaving in a way that you will take into consideration the people around you.

To take an example, when you open the door or when you close the door, if you do it with awareness you will realise that if you bang the door you will disturb others, so naturally there comes a different way of behaving. These are small things, but they go a long way. If there is a need to speak, you will speak in such a considerate way and only if it is really important to speak, otherwise you realise that while speaking you will be disturbing the other people around you.

So you see how there is a natural kind of morality, that arises from this skill of having awareness in relation to your behaviour, and the same thing will arise in relation to your speech, because you will be very, very careful, you will be aware of your speech, and then hurting others, creating problems for others, will become less and less. So naturally there will be a change, a shift in your thoughts, in your words, and in your actions.

There is a story I would like to relate which brings out this aspect very clearly. There was once a highly respected monk, a meditating monk living in a certain place, and people really admired him and really respected him for the way that he was living, for the way he was making a commitment to his spiritual life. And a rich woman in that area heard about this monk and she wanted to give him a very special gift. So there was a goldsmith in the village and she told this goldsmith: Please make a bowl out of gold. There was also a chief robber in the village. He heard that the goldsmith is making a bowl out of gold.

He was waiting until the bowl was made, and the day it was presented to the monk he went to the temple. When the monk saw the robber immediately he realised why he had come. So he went to his room, came out and threw the bowl in the direction of the robber. The robber was very surprised, but he was a very thoughtful person. He thought: Now what sort of man is he? I have been waiting for so many months to steal the bowl and the day he gets it he just throws it away.

So he became very curious and he went to the monk and said: What kind of person are you? I was waiting all this time to steal that bowl and then you just threw it away. So the monk calmly said: I am a meditator. Then the robber asked: Can I also meditate? And the monk said yes he could also meditate. Then the robber was even more shocked, because in the past whenever he went to a spiritual teacher they told him: First you have to give up your profession. So then the robber said: You are the first spiritual teacher who says I can still have my profession and also practice meditation. This is wonderful! Can you tell me something about what your practice of meditation?

So the monk in very simple terms said: Just be mindful of what you are doing, just be aware of what you are doing. The robber thought: This sounds simple, but let me find out whether I can do it. So after a few days he thought: Now it is time for me to practice my profession. Now I should break into a house, and he went off to do it. But then, as he was trying to break into the house, he thought of the words of the monk: I should be aware of what I am doing. So when he realised what he was doing, he could not proceed further. He went back to the monk and he said: I want to ordain and become a monk.

So this story, very clearly, but in simple terms, explains what I was saying about how awareness brings about a change in our behaviour.

TWO KINDS OF MEDITATION

In Buddhist meditation there are two aspects. One aspect is experiencing a mind that is calm, a mind that is still and tranquil. The other aspect is, to develop insight, develop wisdom. Awareness helps us to experience both these aspects of meditation. So we can use our awareness to focus on an object like the breath, which we will be trying to do tomorrow maybe a little bit more like we did it today. And then when we are with the breath even for a few minutes we might experience some calm, some tranquillity, some stillness.

And with this general awareness you can have an understanding, a glimpse that there is only awareness, there is no ego, there is no 'I', there is no me apart from this awareness, where the subject and the object just become one, where you have a non-dual experience; and with that experience will come insight and wisdom. And this can also happen with the breath, where you may have a glimpse that there is only the breath, but there is no 'I', no me, that is breathing. So here I tried to touch on some aspects of why awareness is important in the practice of meditation.

I think the Buddha emphasised very much that for people who live a layperson's life, that they should integrate spiritual life and meditation into their daily life. In Sri Lanka I live in a meditation centre, which is mainly for lay people. And there what we try to emphasise is how to integrate meditation with daily life. So as we progress in the retreat, especially the last two or three days, I will be emphasising and focusing on this aspect of how to integrate what we learn here into daily life. This is why we do work, what we call working meditation, because in everyday life we need to work. And while we are here, if we can work with a meditative mind then in everyday life we should be able to do that also. This is a very good way of integrating meditation with daily life.

This is why I will also be emphasising very much working with the emotions, because one of the problems in everyday life is when unpleasant emotions come up. So I will give you tools from the Buddha's teaching, how to work with these emotions when they arise in everyday life.

LOVING-KINDNESS

There is a connection between awareness and loving-kindness. That is why I was also suggesting today that with whatever is happening in your mind and body, how far can you be aware of it, and how far can you be friendly to what is happening? I was also emphasising today especially learning to be friendly to unpleasant sensations, to unpleasant experiences. It can be tension, it can be anxiety, it can be pain. How far can you be friendly to them and again use awareness? Today I will just briefly touch on some aspects of loving-kindness. Tomorrow the emphasis will be on loving-kindness and so then maybe you can make an effort to develop it more, and in the evening we will have a discussion about it.

I feel one important aspect of loving-kindness is learning to be your own best friend. We don't realise that sometimes we are our own best enemy. How we live in such a way that we create our own suffering in different ways, and in doing that we don't realise that we are the enemy, but we assume that the enemy is outside. Only if you can really feel friendly to yourself can you really learn to be friendly to others.

Another aspect of loving-kindness is using loving-kindness to forgive or to heal the wounds that we carry. So you will be learning how to heal these wounds by forgiving yourself, and how to heal wounds by forgiving others. Also, as I said earlier, we will be learning to be friendly to physical pain and mental pain as far as possible.

So these are some areas that we will go into tomorrow and I hope you will experience and start working on these areas and then experience what it is to be your best friend, what it is to be friendly to others, what it is to forgive and heal these wounds that you are carrying within yourselves.

Now let us do some chanting and after chanting we can end with meditation of loving-kindness.

DAY 2: LOVING-KINDNESS

GODWIN: Welcome to those who have come for the evening. It's very nice that you are here. I am happy that Paul has organised these weekly sittings and discussions. I am sure it is serving a very useful purpose.

So today we will discuss loving-kindness. I feel that it is a very important aspect in Buddhist meditation. There is a very interesting statement by the Buddha about the practice of meditation of loving-kindness: he was talking to a group of monks and he told them that if you can practice meditation of loving-kindness during the time it takes to snap your fingers you are worthy of being monks.

This statement has two implications: one is that if anyone can meditate for even such a short duration it is something very important, it is something very significant. And maybe another is, that there is no one who cannot meditate for such a short time on friendliness. So especially the second point is something very helpful for us.

It is interesting psychologically that meditation of loving-kindness begins with oneself. Now a question arises: Does it show that we are not friendly to ourselves? If you reflect on this question, you will realise that we are indeed unfriendly to ourselves, we indeed sometimes dislike ourselves, hate ourselves.

So let us find out how we become unfriendly to ourselves, how we hate ourselves. In what way do we develop these things? Maybe a common way is that we have expectations about ourselves and then, when we cannot achieve these expectations, we feel bad, we feel guilty, we feel disappointed, we start to hate ourselves. So this is one common aspect, where this not liking ourselves may arise.

And maybe another way we do this is – there is a term that I like to use – we learn to give ourselves minuses. So those who are unfriendly to themselves are very good in giving only minuses to themselves. There are very good reasons to give themselves plusses, but because they are not friendly to themselves, they can create a hell where only minuses exist, and such people generally like to give minuses to other people also.

So they live in this world where only minuses exist. And sometimes they can be very, creative. They can be very creative in a destructive way. They are so creative, they can look for reasons, look for situations, sometimes even imagine situations and then give big minuses. And in this way we start disliking ourselves, we start hating ourselves, we see ourselves as worthless, unsuccessful, useless. People who like to play the victim, that is, I think, the modern way to describe them. I learnt this word from someone in the West.

I think we are all familiar with how we become our own enemy in different ways, sometimes very gross, sometimes very subtle. So you see the importance of loving-kindness and the aspect of learning to be friendly to oneself. There has to be a shift, slowly, maybe minute by minute, second by second as the Buddha said: from seeing yourself as your own worst enemy, you have to learn to be your best friend. When you can learn to be your best friend, then you can learn to be a friend to others. And then this can generate a lot of joy, a lot of happiness, a lot of lightness.

Another aspect where we need to use loving-kindness is learning to relate to our shortcomings, our weaknesses. When we make a mistake, how do we relate to that using

loving-kindness? Because we are all human – and it is very nice that we are all human – but as we are human, we are bound to make mistakes. And when we make mistakes, how can we use loving-kindness in such a situation? What do we do when we make a mistake? Immediately give a big minus?

So hereafter, when you make a mistake, please don't give yourself a minus, and without giving yourself a minus, you can start to reflect. This reflection is a very, very important aspect of meditation. I will emphasise that, introducing it as we go along in this retreat.

So relating to yourself as your best friend, you have a dialogue with yourself: Now what happened to you? What made you do that? What made you say that word? You must ask this question in a very friendly, gentle, kind way so as to just come to understand yourself. Then you learn to see different aspects, different accents to your actions. So in this way it is something very beautiful that, rather than suffer, rather than beat ourselves, rather than feel guilty, we will learn from our mistakes.

So please realise this: that this is not a matter of giving into that mistake. But rather understanding our mistakes and then learning from them, and then effecting a kind of natural transformation from that. If you can relate to your mistakes in this way, you will never carry them as wounds, which can be something very destructive, to hold on to these wounds, hold on to what has happened in the past.

In this way, when you see the mistakes of other people, when you see the faults of other people, then you can relate to them in this way with understanding, with loving-kindness, and this can also give a lot of understanding: without getting angry, without developing hatred, we develop more and more understanding about human nature, in whichever way it arises: whether in relation to ourselves, or in relation to others. So in this way we learn to forgive ourselves and to forgive others. This is a powerful way of healing those wounds that we carry in relation to our mistakes, and in relation to the mistakes of others.

REJOICING

Another very positive aspect of loving-kindness is that you learn to see more and more your good qualities, not only the failings, not only the minuses. It is very interesting that the Buddha encouraged this very much. Because you learn to rejoice in the good actions you are doing. The word rejoice is very beautiful, very significant. I am sure you have many, many reasons to rejoice about yourself. But I am sure if I ask you, you will find it very difficult to think of anything! So therefore I would just like to remind you about some things, and please learn to rejoice in them now.

One thing is that you have come to meditation. That's a reason to rejoice! What a commitment you have made for meditation: you have left your house for a few days, you have left your job for a few days, and come here and practice this noble silence. Other things: getting up early in the morning, and sitting when there is a lot of pain. How many people are prepared to do this? How many people have the opportunity to do this? But we never take into consideration these simple points. So please rejoice now! Please give yourself a big plus.

Another reason to rejoice is that you are leading harmless lives. That you are making an effort not to create problems or suffering for yourself, or suffering for others, and that you are making an effort to work with these aspects of suffering and through meditation trying

to work on suffering. So isn't that a very beautiful commitment that you have made for the spiritual life?

And the kind of life that we are leading here, the last few days, and the days to come, is really trying to lead a harmless life, trying not to create any suffering for ourselves, trying to avoid suffering for others. What a beautiful way to live! So that's another very good reason to rejoice.

Another difficult aspect in meditation is to work with yourself, because in meditation what comes up is sometimes not very pleasant. Sometimes there is physical pain; sometimes there is psychological pain. Because in everyday life, you are so busy that there is no space, no opportunity for them to come up. But here in such situations, practising silence, being alone with yourself, these monsters come up. We are creating an opportunity for them to arise. So again, please prepare to do this, please prepare to really work with them.

The usual thing you do when you have such problems — isn't it right? — you go to the therapist. So here, what are you doing: here you are learning to be your own therapist. If there is a therapist here, he will not be very happy! But that is another matter. So learning to be your own therapist is another good reason to rejoice.

Just reflect on what it means to be your own therapist: it means that you have self-confidence; you are trying to develop tools to really work with whatever happens mentally, physically. Having complete self-reliance on yourself. This is something Buddha emphasised very much. The school where I went to was a Buddhist school. In schools they have mottoes. And the Buddhist motto that the school where I went to uses, I mean in Pali I still remember that: *Atta hi attano natho*, self-help is the best help.

This is extremely difficult. Because we do not like to rely on ourselves, we like external props to hang on to. This gives a kind of security. So I think this is another very positive reason for us to rejoice. I can go on like this, until you get bored with rejoicing! But please reflect on these very simple points that I made. Do we ever think of these things? You see how we are not really our own best friends.

Another beautiful thing is rejoicing in the happiness of others. So when you see other people happy that makes you yourself very happy. When you are happy, you are happy about that, and when you see others happy, you are happy about the happiness of others. It is called *mudita*, sympathetic joy.

A very destructive emotion that we have is jealousy and envy, which is the complete opposite of rejoicing in the happiness of others. So that this also teaches us, enables us to see, the positive in ourselves, and the positive in others.

So isn't it really a powerful practice, when there are minuses in ourselves, we know how to work with them. And when we see minuses in others, we know how to work with them. And then we know to relate to the plusses in ourselves, and to the plusses in others also.

Another aspect of loving-kindness is a quality that we take for granted, the quality of feeling grateful. I was in Bodhgaya, the place where the Buddha was enlightened. Now according to the story of what the Buddha did after he became enlightened, one thing was to spend 7 days looking at the Bodhi tree which had given him shade, which had helped him to get enlightened. And he showed his gratitude by standing and gazing at the tree for 7 days. Do we ever feel grateful for things like a tree, or for something which has helped us? But when

we develop this quality of loving-kindness, we learn to appreciate and feel grateful for things, for little things, for small things, which we normally take for granted.

Something that we can all be grateful for is, to have a human birth, which according to the Dhamma is something very, very precious. Why is human birth considered so precious? Only a human being has the potential, has the qualities necessary to become a Buddha. Has the necessary qualities to become free. So please realise that: we all have the qualities within us to be free.

In a way one of the things in meditation, in the spiritual life, is to realise this: to see that we have all these qualities within us, just to see them, just to realise them, and this can make such a difference to our self-perception, it can make such a shift of attitude in us. So in this way, as with rejoicing, we can find so many reasons why we feel grateful.

You should feel grateful that there is such a place as this here, where you can come and meditate and be peaceful, that there are Dhamma books to read, and spiritual friends to discuss things with. What a thing to feel grateful for. In this centre I see that you are so fortunate, because you can be exposed to many teachers of different traditions, and that's a thing to really feel grateful for, that you can be exposed to different teachings, different aspects of spirituality.

When I was in the centre in Sri Lanka one day a blind monk came to the centre. So when this blind monk spent a few days in our centre, for the first time I realised: how grateful I should be that I have eyes to see. Do you ever feel grateful that you have eyes to see? Do you ever feel grateful that you can hear? There are people who cannot hear.

These are small things, little things. This is the beauty of the Dhamma, of meditation: the spiritual life is not about having special, extraordinary experiences, but just being open to these small things, little things, and how that can really open your heart.

THE BENEFITS OF LOVING-KINDNESS

I would like to just to talk about some of the benefits of loving-kindness meditation which are mentioned in a particular text. The first three are very interesting, very practical:

1: *You sleep very peacefully.* This is why we do meditation on loving-kindness before we go to sleep because then we can sleep peacefully.

2: And if you sleep peacefully *you can wake up peacefully.* That is the second benefit. In this world, how many people sleep peacefully and wake up peacefully? In Sri Lanka I try to help people with psychological problems, and amongst other problems, I try to help people who cannot sleep, people who suffer from insomnia, and this loving-kindness meditation invariably helps them to sleep.

3: The third benefit that is mentioned is *you don't see unpleasant dreams* or nightmares, and because of that you sleep peacefully and awaken peacefully.

4: Another interesting benefit is that *your face becomes serene.* Your face becomes like the face of the babies we have in this centre. So you don't have to spend money for cosmetics. You can save the money and practice loving-kindness. But it is a very interesting benefit, because it shows that loving-kindness can even affect your face.

And if it can affect your face it can affect your body. There are what are called psychosomatic illnesses. I hear that there are special clinics here only for psychosomatic illnesses. So if you can make your body sick with your minds, you can also heal your bodies to a great extent by loving-kindness. So in psychosomatic illness what is suggested is to examine the way you relate to yourself. The way you are relating to yourself is bringing up these illnesses, in other words find out how you are creating your own illnesses.

Perhaps one evening I might speak about relationships, because these are some of the greatest challenges we have in everyday life. So with loving-kindness when other people like you, they are friendly to you; because you are friendly to them, in the same way they are friendly to you. So this is a very simple practical way of improving problems of relationships.

5. Another interesting benefit that is mentioned is that *not only human beings, but also non-humans start to like you*. Who are these non-humans? They can be trees, plants, animals. And if there are beings which we cannot see – who knows? – even they might be affected by the vibrations that we generate in our mind and body.

There are some very interesting experiments in relation to how even trees and plants can respond to the emotions of human beings who are around them. By the way there is some interesting news about Nilambe, the centre I live in. We found that there is a leopard nearby! If you come you have to have lot of loving-kindness! Maybe I should tell you the story of how the leopard was discovered.

Once it happened that a young man from Germany, who had the idea of becoming a monk, a very serious meditator, wanted to spend some days in a cave all by himself, outside the centre in the forest. So he asked permission whether he might stay there. So I said it is okay, but I also heard that there is a leopard there. But if you think you are not afraid, and that you can stay there, you are most welcome to stay there.

So the first two days he was very happy, very peaceful, very, very peaceful. The third day suddenly there appeared the leopard just a few yards away from him. The leopard looked at him and their eyes met, and fortunately he had no fear at that moment and the leopard left. But after that, my friend left the cave and came running to me. I said it is okay, please come back and stay with us.

But it is interesting that there was a Western monk in the centre and he thought he would like to experiment with fear. Now, that is a very interesting practice. So he went there and just wanted to stay one night in the cave to see what happens. And he also came back the next morning, saying: The whole night I could not sleep!

In Sri Lanka there are meditating monks who live in the deep forest where there are wild animals, without being attacked by them, and the secret is that they practice loving-kindness towards the animals. And I think the animals can feel it, just as they can feel it when there is fear in you, and that is why they attack.

6. Another benefit that is mentioned among the benefits of loving-kindness is that *your mind becomes one-pointed* – I am not happy with the word ‘concentrated’, which is the normal translation, the Pali word that is used is *samadhi*. So for meditation loving-kindness is very, very helpful. It is through friendliness and acceptance that one can really meditate. Otherwise, by hating and by fighting and by controlling we can never relax and we can

never feel peaceful. This is why I have very often been mentioning that you should just be friendly to what is happening around you, without resisting, without disliking.

7. One other benefit that is mentioned is that *you can die with complete awareness*. Why is dying consciously so important? One reason is that it is the last chance you have to become enlightened. So if you have missed it during your life, it is the last chance when you are dying.

This discourse shows therefore that you can live peacefully, that you can sleep peacefully, and you can die peacefully if you practice loving-kindness.

QUESTIONS ABOUT LOVING-KINDNESS

Now are there any questions please?

RETREATANT: *How can we forgive a person who continues to resort to violence?*

GODWIN: That's a very good question, and I like practical questions that we can all relate to. We have all encountered such situations in our life in one way or another. So how do we relate to such a situation as meditators practising loving-kindness?

The first response — it may not be very easy — but one thing we may try to practice from the Buddhist perspective is: not to be surprised in such situations. Why do I say this? Why are we surprised in such a situation? Because we have the idea, the image, the expectation that others should not resort to violence, especially against me.

There is a very interesting perspective, a Buddhist analysis of human nature. That our shortcomings — it can be hatred, it can be violence, in whatever form they arise — are due to three reasons. And the three reasons are greed, hatred and delusion. So as long as we have these three characteristics, we will behave sometimes violently, sometimes irrationally, in all the ways human beings are behaving in this world. When you see behaviour arising from greed, hatred and delusion — in other words, when you see such actions coming from imperfect human beings — should we be surprised? We should be surprised if people don't live in this way!

According to Buddhism we are living in a crazy world. In that sense we are all crazy. Only when we are enlightened do we become completely sane. Why do I say we are crazy? Because we have created a subjective world and we live in this subjective world which does not correspond to reality. Who can say here that you always see things just as they are? The problem with us is we take this crazy world too seriously. So when we see crazy behaviour please don't be surprised. This is the first point I would like to make.

The second point to reflect on is the person who resorts to violence and continues to resort to violence. Perhaps he does not know any other way of relating to human beings. My guess is he must be a very unhappy man with a lot of suffering, which perhaps he may not be aware of.

So if you can see a human being's reality in this way, rather than feel angry about them, we learn to feel sympathetic to them. We feel sorry for such people, who do not know any other way of behaving, but only being destructive to themselves, and destructive to others, the complete opposite of the spiritual way of living. Sometimes with such people, it can be

extremely difficult to even reach them or communicate with them, because they are completely closed to any suggestions.

So let us analyse it from the point of view of our suffering. Such a thing has happened to you and it has affected you, you carry a wound in relation to what the other person has done. And if you carry such a wound, every time you remember that man, what happens? You are angry with that man; you are hurt by that man. So in relation to what he did you can be suffering, and this can be a very destructive thing, this wound you are suffering from.

So as you cannot help him, as a person who is practising loving-kindness, you can make an effort to learn to help yourself. If someone is anxious to heal such a wound, what are the tools that he can use in healing that wound? One is to reflect in the first place how this wound has been created. Then you realise: the wound has been created by the image, by the expectation I had of how others should behave towards me.

Another way to heal the wound is to realise that this has happened in the past, it is gone, I cannot change it, but I am carrying the pain of the past in the way I carry this wound around in myself. So you have to make a choice: do I continue to suffer, or do I try to stop this suffering I am having by letting go of the past? And then try to understand his behaviour and as far as possible to forgive him. There is a very interesting statement by Christ in this connection that I like, he said: forgive them, because they do not know why they are acting in that way.

Because sometimes we humans assume that a person knows why he is acting in such a way, but if you get a chance to have a dialogue with him, perhaps he might say: I don't know why I did it, it just happened to me. Don't we in certain situations act in a certain way and we really don't know why, we cannot find out the reason?

So this may be difficult, but it is really worthwhile, if you can heal the wound in this way, a burden that you may have been carrying for many, many years, it can give you such release and such lightness.

Maybe you have to stop any further connection with him, but still you may make a connection indirectly by wishing him: May he one day realise what he is doing, may he some day understand what he is doing, and through that let him not continue the same destructive behaviour as he had in the past. These are some suggestions. Any other questions please? Please ask. That was a very good question, a very practical question.

RETREATANT: *How can we have loving-kindness when anger comes up?*

GODWIN: That is also a very important question. Because I feel it is very, very important to combine awareness with loving-kindness. In this connection there is a very beautiful Mahayana statement where it says: Can you develop awareness like a mother watching her only child? Can we watch ourselves in the same way as a mother watching her child? You have to watch yourself in the same way.

So going back to the situations you described where you are distracted, disturbed by what other people are doing here, and also back in everyday life you are disturbed, distracted by what is happening outside yourself. Now how does one use both awareness and loving-kindness in relation to that?

DAY 2: LOVING-KINDNESS

For instance here, when you want to be silent, if someone is speaking, then what you can learn to do is to observe the anger, to be aware of that anger. Your tension, your anger is in relation to what is happening inside you, and not what the person is doing. It is because of your sensitivity that you developed that anger.

So this is where loving-kindness comes in. So you say to yourself: I am angry, I am annoyed, I am a meditator, but it is okay to get annoyed. It is okay to get irritated, because that person is giving me an opportunity to work with this situation now. So let me feel grateful to that person because he is creating this situation for me, so that I can learn to work with my anger: May that person be well, happy, and peaceful as I work with this anger.

This is a very valuable experience, an insight for you when you go back home and maybe try to meditate and your next-door neighbour is making a big noise. Then you can remember: Ah, there I learned to look at my own anger. So now let me work with the anger that my very good neighbour is creating for me.

So in this way we are learning something very valuable, we are learning from our own mistakes, we are learning from our own reactions. So the emphasis is not on the person or the situation that is creating the reaction, but you learn to make that reaction the object of meditation.

So this does not mean that you start speaking now so that you can create such situations for other people! I am not saying this is this place to do that!

So any other questions? Maybe time for one last question.

RETREATANT: *Is there another power helping us to have loving-kindness?*

GODWIN: If there is another power that is helping you, you are very, very fortunate, but while the power is helping you, you can also develop your own loving-kindness. As I was saying: perhaps there are other beings who are helping you, who are friendly to you, which help you to like yourself and be friendly to yourself.

So now we will do some chanting, and then we will end with meditation of loving-kindness.

DAY 3: MONSTERS

GODWIN: I do not get the impression that monsters are really affecting you so much. Perhaps that is the difference when you are in everyday life and when you are in a meditation retreat. I think in everyday life when they come they can affect us very deeply. We can be really affected and overwhelmed by them. In Buddhist terms that means our suffering and conflict. But Buddhism and the Dhamma very clearly present a way out of this suffering. So I would like to present some tools based on the teachings: how to work with the monsters and how we can free ourselves of the effects they can have on us.

One thing which is not very easy to overcome is that we have a very strong conditioning not to like them, to really hate our monsters. The simple reason for this is that when we experience them, it is not so pleasant. So the first tool I would like to present is: how far can we open to them? How far can we have the openness to learn from them?

I think yesterday I talked a lot about the importance of feeling grateful. One day I was talking to a Buddhist Thai nun at the Centre and she said something very interesting to me. She said we should feel grateful when we are faced with difficult situations, problems, with these unpleasant emotions. So if we can really learn to do this: when they are there, to feel grateful that we have an opportunity to work with them and learn to free ourselves from them. This is the first tool I would like to present to you.

The second tool is that when we try to learn about them, when we try to investigate them, as it is said in the Dhamma, we can make some very interesting discoveries about them which we normally take for granted. One important discovery is to see the connection between our thoughts and these emotions.

An important question to reflect on in this connection is: can there be suffering without a thought? And related to that is: can there really be an emotion without a thought? That is why in meditation it is very important to learn to work with our thoughts: how we use thoughts destructively, how we use thoughts to create stories, stories about what has happened, and stories about what we think is going to happen; and how, although these stories are not real, still we give a reality to them and we suffer from them; how we become victims of the stories that we create ourselves. It is very important for us to see this clearly.

One of the stories that we create, a very subtle story, is this idea that there is an I or a me, an ego. And it's this idea that is really creating most of these emotions and sufferings. According to the Dhamma, you realise that it is with the sense of ownership that suffering arises: this is *my* anger, this is *my* fear, this is *my* anxiety, this is *my* sadness, this is *my* joy. So whatever you consider as *mine*, because you think that you possess them, you do not like to let go of them.

So what is very important for us to try sometimes is to see if we can relate to these states of mind without a sense of ownership. There is just anger, but it is not *my* anger. Realising the anger arises due to a reason, due to certain conditions, and due to certain conditions it pass away again. I will touch on this aspect as we go on, but just to have this tool: sometimes learning to let go of this sense of ownership, the sense that they really belong to us. It is really funny that we even start owning these monsters!

DAY 3: MONSTERS

When I say this I am reminded of a very short Zen story. So a student went before a Zen master and he said: 'I have a problem.' The Zen master said, 'What is your problem?' He said, 'My problem is my anger.' 'So where is the anger now?' The student couldn't answer, so then the Zen master said 'If it is *your* anger, you should be able to show it'. This is a small story, but it has a very profound deep truth. If you have monsters: can you produce them now?

So this brings up another tool, which is: when these monsters are not there, just know that they are not there. I think this is a most important tool according to the Dhamma. Working with meditators over the years this is the most difficult tool for them to understand. Because that there are situations where there are no monsters is too good to believe.

It is really funny that we have given these monsters such power, such energy, that in the first place, we may not even know when they are not there; and even when someone points it out to you, it is too good to believe! So some meditators come and tell me: maybe they are not there, and maybe I am repressing them. Or: who knows? maybe they will come up again tomorrow.

It is one of the very simple points that Thich Nhat Hanh teaches, that when there is a toothache we suffer, we are hurt by it. But when we do not have a toothache do we ever say: Wow, it's great, I do not have a toothache? So some other meditators tell me: even when the toothache is not there they think: maybe it will come soon, maybe it will come tomorrow. Aren't we really funny?

So here again the Dhamma says it so clearly: when greed, hatred and delusion are there, just to know that they are there. And when they are not there, to know that they are not there. It is a very simple, a very direct, a very practical teaching, which we can relate to in our everyday life.

In the Dhamma this is how it is presented: when greed, hatred and delusion are not there, do not like that, do not identify with that, do not grasp at that; and when they are there: do not dislike them. So no liking, and no disliking. I use my own terminology based on the Dhamma: no plus, no minus. No plus, no minus: learning to see them, just as they are.

Another Buddhist idea that is presented in relation to working with such unpleasant states of mind is to realise that they are changing, that they are not there all the time. They come and they go. The problem is with us: we see them as very solid, that they are really substantial. The idea is that the power we give them is taken away if we can see that they are changing. The monsters come and the monsters go away. There is no permanent state that they are always there, and only they are there. Just to remind yourself that they will change. It is a very important insight in such situations.

Related to this there is an idea in the Dhamma that I like very much, which is to see these monsters as our visitors. And the word visitor has a very deep meaning: that they do not belong to us. So if you can really see yourself as a host, and see these states of mind as visitors, as a very good host you are waiting for these visitors to come and then to go. And as it happened today to some of you: when you are waiting for the visitors to come, what happens? They do not come!

But if you are afraid of them, and if you do not want them to come – this is the interesting paradox – then they do come! So you are waiting with an alert mind, waiting for the visitors to come, and if they do not come there is no problem. And if they come, also there is

no problem. As I said, you welcome them. And when they come, you learn more about the visitors. This is the Buddhist idea of investigating.

So you look at the visitor very closely. See the visitor very clearly and sharply. And see what really happens to you when the visitor is there. If you can relate to our visitors in this way, then the practice becomes very interesting. Then we develop a curiosity. There is an element of fun. There is an element of enjoyment, so that you do not have to be very heavy, serious and intense. There is a beautiful joy and lightness that is very much encouraged in the Dhamma.

When I say this, I am reminded of a Buddhist story: during the Buddha's time a non-Buddhist who was not practising the Dhamma, visited a group of monks who were meditating. So when this visitor saw these monks he was very impressed: they were looking very happy, they were smiling, there was a beautiful lightness about them, they looked so relaxed. He was very impressed with them.

He went to the Buddha and asked him: What do you teach your disciples? I am very impressed with them. I think, if visitors would come here, they would also be impressed with you! So the Buddha said something very interesting, he said: my disciples do not worry about the past, which cannot be changed, which has gone. And they are not worried about the future, which is still to come. They enjoy the experience, the joy, of the present moment.

So now let us go over the tools that I mentioned one by one again. What was the first one that was mentioned? To be aware of the monsters when they are there. Yes, that is one very important tool. Another is to be happy when they come. Do be open to them, to see them as learning experiences, to ask the question: what can I learn from them? Feeling grateful that they are here.

So another that was mentioned was when they are not there just to know that they are not there. What else do you remember? They do not belong to us. Learning to slowly, slowly let go of our sense of ownership, relating to them in this way: they come and they go; they come and they go.

When we explore, when we investigate, we see the process, the mechanism, the conditions. And with that understanding we can have a very important tool. I am happy that you are remembering the tools. Still I would like to give you more tools.

OUR FRIEND THE BREATH

One is using our friend the breath. So this is why I consider the breath as a friend. This is one of the very important functions of our friend. There are other functions, maybe I will mention them another day, but one very important function is that when there is an emotion, when there is a problem, just think of your friend the breath at that time. The friend enables you to have some space in your mind. Can anyone suggest the reason why when we think of our friend there is an immediate space, an immediate release that is created?

If you are with the breath there is no need for thought, because the breath is a sensation, just a feeling of the in-breath and the out-breath. So as there is a very close connection between thoughts and emotions, as soon as you are with the fact of this sensation there is a release. What we do when there is an emotion is that we really make it bigger by thinking about it, by having thoughts. So all that is immediately reduced, stopped, just by being with the breath, which is objective.

Another way of saying the same thing is – a wonderful aspect of our friend is – the friend is always in the present, and our friend is always reminding us to be in the present, to be like him. He is always in the present. What is important is: please make an effort to make a connection with your friend. Because if you make a connection with your friend, if you can really see the breath as your friend, the breath is always ready to remind you of reality, of the present moment, the reality of the here and the now.

And our friend also is always correct, always right. I do not think that we have another friend who is always right! This friend will always indicate to you when there is an emotion. How does the friend indicate to you that there is an emotion? It goes either more slowly or it goes quicker. So when there is a strong emotion like anger, fear, excitement, your friend shows you a signal, a red light, the coming up of certain things. As we say in Sri Lanka – coming colour – no good!

So if you have made a connection with your friend, the friend will warn you when you are getting angry, when you have fear, when you are getting excited. The friend will warn you by going very fast. When your mind is calm and when your mind is relaxed, when your mind is completely still, the friend again tells you very clearly. How does the friend tell you? He is also very calm.

Related to this is something that I am discovering now; how there is a very interesting connection between emotions and what is happening in your body. There is a very subtle mechanism in our body by which we have a way of carrying these emotions in certain places in our body. And the signal, the symptom, the sign, is that there is tension in such places. So some tensions – I would not say all tensions – but some tensions in the body are an indication that there is a repressed emotion somewhere. And sometimes we do something very interesting in relation to the tension in the body: immediately we try to associate it with an emotion.

To give a practical example: when there is fear, you have a particular sensation, a particular tension in your body, so one gets used to it, and whenever there is that tension in the body, one starts to associate it with fear. Sometimes I meet meditators and they tell me they have fear. I ask them: where do you experience that fear? They tell me they experience fear in the body. So I ask them: how can you experience fear in the body?

What exactly is happening to them is that they have this association of a particular tension with the fear. Then I tell them – it is sometimes very difficult, but it is a very interesting exercise – to separate the sensation from the fear. This association has become so fixed, it has become such a strong habit. So I go on working with them, and then they can have moments when there is just the sensation and they do not experience fear. And that can be a breakthrough, where they learn just to be with the sensation without the thoughts creating the emotion.

SELF-CONFIDENCE

And then what is very important is that when you use these different tools – and that is why I give different tools, so you can start to experiment with them, sometimes one tool helps, sometimes another tool helps – whenever you try to use these tools and they work, then something very beautiful happens. That is you develop self-confidence.

And with this self-confidence you come to a state where you are not afraid, you need not be stressed by them, you need not control them. Let any monsters come, I know how to handle them. So I really hope and wish that everyone here, before you leave the retreat will gain that confidence: that when any monster comes in everyday life, you know how to handle them, you know how to work with them.

Another very important thing that happens is that with this self-confidence you come to a state where whether the monsters are there or whether they are not there makes no difference. Then you have a glimpse of what the Buddha said: you learn to see things just as they are. And this also helps us to transcend, go beyond, the positive and the negative, the plus and the minus polarity or duality.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

So please ask any questions.

RETREATANT: *How can we live without thinking about the past and the future?*

GODWIN: I think this was something we talked about yesterday, I went into this question where I said that we need to sometimes plan and to think about the future. So what we need is to learn to use the past functionally and to use the future functionally, creatively, and not to create these stories where I am suffering as a result of the past and the future. And I also said on that occasion what is important to realise is: we think of the future and we think of the past, in the present. So if you can give more reality to the present then you realise that what we are thinking about the past is not real. So the power and the energy we have given to the past and the future drops away with this realisation. Anything else? Any other question?

RETREATANT: *How can we discover under what conditions our monsters arise?*

GODWIN: This is why I give you many tools. For one person, discovering the patterns may be helpful, for another the experience of impermanence can help. So I would like to say something more about these patterns that we were talking about.

It is very important to realise these things by investigating, exploring, learning. If you have this openness you discover patterns. Under the influence of what patterns do these monsters arise? Under what conditions do they arise?

Also it is important to discover when the monsters are not there what is exactly happening to you, what is exactly happening to the so-called patterns that you have discovered. It is equally important to know when they are not there: now, how is it that they are not there? What has happened to the patterns? Then you realise that the patterns have also changed.

Anything else? I am happy that such practical questions are being raised, because this is actually your experience. I like such type of questions.

RETREATANT: *How can we be a good host when the monsters are not there?*

GODWIN: That is a very interesting question. So we want to practice the tools and when the monsters are not coming how can we use the tools? That becomes a problem! As I said, we are happy with the absence of the monsters but then how to use these tools?

So it is okay. If they do not come, they do not come. Just stay with that. I am sure you will get an opportunity to use the tools. They have done some research in America amongst the meditation masters. They included even some monks from Thailand and Burma, very highly advanced, spiritual monks, and they have asked about these emotions, these monsters. And these meditation masters said something very interesting: They did not say that they do not have these emotions. They come, but when they come they have learned how to recover from them very quickly.

So this is it. They are bound to come, they are bound to arise. But what we have to learn is, when they come: use the tools. This idea of the quick recovery is very well illustrated in a Buddhist text which gives different similes in relation to anger. One way of relating to anger is compared to letters written on stones: they never go away, they are with us all the time. Another type of anger is like letters written on sand: they may last for weeks, maybe months. And another type of anger is like letters written on water.

And I think of the anger of children; the emotions of children, generally speaking, are like the third category. They can cry, they can be angry, and a few minutes later they can smile and come back to your lap. It is an interesting question: why cannot we be like children? I think one possible explanation is: they do not have the image that they should not get angry. So, when we have an image that as meditators we should not get angry, then when we get angry we feel angry about the anger!

That is why I said this openness is very important. If anger comes, let it come. If anger does not come, it does not come. So staying with this openness is very important. That will help us to recover very quickly.

I must say these things sound very simple. But, one has to practice them. So anything else? Any other questions?

RETREATANT: *What is the difference between enjoying and indulging ourselves? For instance, when we are eating.*

GODWIN: Actually I use the word enjoy in the sense that if you can find these things interesting, if you can see them as an opportunity, if you can see it as a gift, then you relate

to whatever emotion comes in an entirely different way, instead of giving it a minus, feeling guilty, feeling yourself to be a failure, and so on. This is the point I meant, I hope it is clear. This is not simply expressing the emotions when they come. That is what is meant by indulging.

Sometimes, before a meal starts, we are already imagining the taste of the food! That is why I told you to make an experiment to see at what point you really taste your food. Do you see the power of thoughts? If you really need to work with such practical situations, one tool is to think of the reality of the present moment. Here you are escaping into the future. So come back to the breath and stay with your friend for a few minutes, and then the kind of indulging you talked about with your thoughts stops. So this is one tool.

Another interesting tool is sometimes to allow the thoughts to arise and then watch your state of mind. So you have these thoughts going on, and then when you focus more attention on the state of mind rather than the thoughts themselves, you might even have a glimpse, a small realisation, that these thoughts of food are there, but you are not reacting to them.

And another tool is to tell yourself, this is just thoughts, this is just thinking, this is not the reality. This is why there is a meditation technique called just noting. So when they arise you just say: thoughts, thoughts; thinking, thinking. And when you say that, you get a distance from them rather than getting all involved with the contents of the thoughts.

Anything else? Any other question?

RETREATANT: *In what way should we behave like children, and what can we learn from them? Children are not very detached!*

GODWIN: So the example I gave about the child in relation to anger was to illustrate how soon they recover from the anger. Another aspect or another possibility, as I said, is that the child is able to recover from the anger so quickly, because the child, depending on the age, has no image, no model, that one should not get angry. And as I pointed out sometimes when we have an image that we should not get angry, then when we *do* get angry, there is a reaction to the anger.

So what we can learn from a child are these certain aspects. Then to realise how after all a child-like mine also has its limitations, but to learn something from it and then to go beyond that. To transcend is getting a distance, developing – the word you used was – detachment, which children do not have. That is what I mean by going beyond the child's example. Do you understand? You made the comment that the child is not detached. But what I am saying is about how one can use certain aspects of a child-like behaviour to recover, and then when one wants to be detached – as you say – one has to be a meditator. Anything else? I am happy that you are asking questions like that.

RETREATANT: *What should we do when we make mistakes owing to a lack of awareness? For example when we find we are being greedy – afterwards I feel so guilty!*

GODWIN: That is a very good and practical question, because I think again we will all relate to this. It is not only in relation to greed, it is possible that we might get angry, we might say something, we might hurt someone. So despite all our awareness, despite all our tools, supposing it has really happened, then what do we do? At that moment one could not have

been aware. So either you were really indulging the emotion, or you made a big mistake. So then what does one do?

What I would suggest is, just to wait until you have recovered from that. And once you have recovered, once a little space is created, then you can look back on what has happened to you. And when that happens, as you quite rightly said, you feel guilty, you feel bad, you can feel hopeless, you can see yourself as a failure. But I would suggest all that is not necessary.

Yesterday I made the point in talking about loving-kindness that this is one of the most important things we have to learn: to relate to our own mistakes with loving-kindness. So when you reflect on that act the first thing is to do so without giving it a minus, and the other is not to be surprised. Then, without being surprised, without giving yourself a minus, like a very close friend you just find out what really happened to you, what really made you greedy, what were the things you wanted. Like a mother questioning her child in this way, you try to have that kind of very friendly, gentle, understanding dialogue with yourself. So if one can have a connection with our so-called wrong actions in this way, then they become opportunities, we can learn from them.

In this connection Thich Nhat Hanh said something beautiful: I see a compost-heap for rubbish which people just throw away. But this compost can be used for the growing of vegetables and flowers. And so our own compost, our failures, our shortcomings, if we can use them for our spiritual growth, that is a beautiful way of relating to our own compost. This is showing loving-kindness to our shortcomings, our monsters, our failures. Then we can learn to relate to the failures and the shortcomings of other people in the same way.

NEXT DAY'S SCHEDULE

Tomorrow I thought I would speak about relationships, because that is another challenge in the human condition. And one of the meditators also made a request for me to speak about sexuality. I thought sexuality is not discussed in spiritual circles! But tomorrow I hope to try.

Then in tomorrow's meditation I would like to suggest to do a more reflective type of meditation. So reflect on the theme of relationships, and see for yourself, how in relationships monsters are created, how monsters are created in yourself, how monsters are created in others, to see the different monsters which arise in relation to your own situation. And then find out through that understanding, through that seeing, whether one can change your relationship to those monsters. So please make this the object of meditation tomorrow.

I hope what I am saying is clear. But maybe tomorrow in the morning I will again remind you of the importance of reflecting on your relationships, and seeing how you use them destructively; and to discover whether there is a way of uncovering something very creative in relationships.

One last point about relationships: the word relationship has a very broad sense. So when you hear the gong tomorrow at 6 o'clock in the morning to wake up: see what is the relationship you have to the sound of the gong! So you start the day with that relationship!

DAY 4: RELATIONSHIPS

GODWIN: I will speak about the importance of spiritual friends. This brings up the question of relationships. I think the question of relationships is the greatest challenge human beings have. Because no human being can avoid relationships. Even a hermit living alone by himself or by herself has to have relationships. What type of relationships do they have to have? Can anyone suggest an answer? Relationship to nature. Relationship to the environment. Relationship to themselves. So in this sense no one can avoid relationships.

Now, the first point about relationships is to find out how you relate to yourself. Some of you might have heard of the French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre. He has written a play about relationships. And in this play he made the statement: Hell is other people. Do you agree? What is the Buddhist response to that statement? Hell is inside us. So this is why in Buddhist teachings it is very, very difficult, because you are considered to be responsible for what you are doing. It is very easy to blame other people. But when we blame other people we never try to work on ourselves, so that one can continue to blame other people and not really look at oneself.

So it is very important to find out how you relate to yourself in the sense: Do you see yourself as your best friend? Or do you have a tendency to be hard on yourself, to give minuses? Do you have no trust in yourself? If you do not have trust and confidence in yourself, you can never have trust and confidence in others. This is why in the Buddhist teaching what is called self-understanding, self-knowledge, is so much emphasised. To find out the way you are relating to yourself.

So for this — as I have reminded you very often — you have to make a connection with yourself. You have to learn to observe your behaviour. You have to find out your real motives, your intentions prior to your actions. You have to learn to be very objective about yourself. You have to be very honest, sincere, and authentic about yourself. So in relationships this is, I would suggest, something very important to be clear about.

And also be clear about your own expectations, about your own idealism, about your own models. Because if you have very unrealistic models about other people, about yourself, about how the world should be, you will always be disappointed. And if you suffer from a kind of void in you, then whatever other people do to you, giving affection, giving attention, it is not good enough.

RELATIONSHIPS TO OTHER PEOPLE

So now let me touch on some aspects about the challenges we have in connection to relating to other people. One real challenge we have is when we see the failures of other people: when we relate to people with our own expectations. So what happens to us when we are expecting people to behave in a particular way in a relationship is that we get hurt, we get disappointed, we get frustrated. And maybe we try to hurt the other person, and then the other person hurts us in return. This is what can happen sometimes in relationships.

What normally happens to us is that we put ourselves on a pedestal, thinking: This is how we should behave; this is how we *must* behave. And we do not realise that we have put ourselves on a pedestal and what happens is that we fall from the pedestal. Then we forget

what we have done, we get hurt, we suffer from guilt, we are disappointed with ourselves. We start to give minuses to ourselves.

This is exactly what we do with other people also. We put other people on pedestals. And when we put others on pedestals, naturally they will also fall from their pedestals. In the first place they do not even know that other people have put them on a pedestal. Poor people! And then when others think that they have fallen from the pedestal they can be terribly hurt, terribly disappointed, terribly frustrated with other people, feel very let down by them.

So this is one of the greatest challenges we have: how to see ourselves in a very realistic way, realising our humanness – as I have been saying so often – realising our imperfections. In some cultures it happens that a model of perfection is projected onto you and projected onto others. So then what happens is that you can never achieve perfection, and you get frustrated and disappointed. But then we project the same ideal of perfection onto others, this is what happens once more.

So it is a very strong conditioning we have, but it is very important in relationships to see ourselves, as I said, in a very human way and to be open to our imperfections, and also to see others in the same way, and then a different kind of relationship can emerge in our day to day life. So if you can be clear about this point, if you can develop some understanding in relation to this, then when you see others showing their weaknesses, showing their imperfections, you learn not to be surprised.

So this is a very important tool to work with, either in relation to ourselves, or in relation to others: not to be surprised about how you may behave, and not to be surprised about how others might behave, not to be surprised about what will happen in life. Why are we surprised in such a situation? We have an image, a model of how things should be, how things must be.

So in a way what we are doing is: we are making demands. We are demanding how others should behave, we are demanding how we should behave, we are demanding how life should be. But the demands we are making and reality are two different things.

And of course we do not realise we are making demands, and then we suffer. I am sure some of you might have come here with a big demand, how in this retreat this is what should happen to me. Demanding I should experience calm, demanding I should experience loving-kindness, demanding I should develop insight and so on. So again the demand is one thing, the reality is another. And what happens: minus. A big minus to Godwin!

Aren't we funny? Why don't we realise how we create our own suffering? So when we see human nature in this way, our own weaknesses, and the weaknesses of other people we will not be surprised. That is a very big step. At least we will suffer less. But this does not mean that you do not do anything about your weaknesses. This is very important. So in relation to yourself something has happened which is against the model that you have had, you have made some mistakes, you have done some wrong things – can you explore that, can you investigate that without giving yourself a minus?

So in a very friendly, gentle, kind way you ask yourself: Now why did I behave in this way? Why did I hurt that person in that way? What made me use those words knowing very well that he or she would be hurt or disappointed? Just to have a friendly dialogue with yourself in relation to these things. So if you can develop this kind of attitude towards yourself, then

you can start to have the same attitude, the same perspective towards others, and then without giving others a big minus and blaming them, or being angry, you try to have a dialogue with that person.

Sometimes people do wrong things, so-called wrong things, without even knowing why they have behaved in that way. So rather than giving a minus immediately, if you can have some space, some understanding, you can try to find out from that person what made him or her do that, in the same way you tried to find out in relation to yourself.

RELATIONSHIPS TO SPIRITUAL FRIENDS

According to the Buddha's teaching the only solution to problems in relationships is to develop spiritual relationships. So in a spiritual relationship – it can be the relationship between parents and children, it can be the relationship between husbands and wives, it can be the relationship between friends and neighbours – it's the same principle: you learn to simply reflect the other person's shortcomings. And if you can also give the freedom and space for another person to do the same for you, that enables you to grow together, help each other, by being a mirror to each other.

Another beautiful aspect of a spiritual relationship is to see the good things the other person does, not only giving minuses, but giving plusses also. It is interesting: it seems to be in our nature that we human beings have a tendency to point out the shortcomings of other people, but not to see the good things, the right things, a person does.

I think parents everywhere in the world tell their children when they make a mistake, when they do something wrong, but generally speaking they do not speak to them with quite the same enthusiasm when they do something right! I think that is why we have this tendency to give ourselves more minuses, because this maybe a very strong conditioning, that we develop even as children.

When I spoke about this somewhere, there was a teacher in the group, and this teacher teaches parents how to bring up children. And she said when she gives workshops to parents, one of the exercises she presents is to ask them to draw up a list of all the wrong, bad things their children do. No problem! And then she tells the parents: now draw up a list of all the good things your children do. Big problem!

Isn't this interesting? And this is what also happens in relationships among grown-up people. Sometimes I have to counsel or try to help couples who have problems. Some of my close Sri Lankan friends laugh at me and they said: Poor couples! This man has no experience with what he is talking about. I do not know what he says to these couples!

One thing I ask them is: Do you give plusses to each other? Usually they just look at each other's blank faces. Sometimes a Sri Lankan wife would give an example like this, she would tell me, when the cooking is not very good, he would get very angry with me giving a lot of minuses. But when the food is fine, he practices noble silence!

These are small things, but as someone said, these small things, these little things, go a long way. I think we all need some attention, some affection, some positive feedback from others. I mean, it is something very beautiful in relationships to have this kind of feedback; as it is said in the Dhamma, to tell the good things that the other has done also.

Another challenge, another aspect in relationships is to see what power we have given to other people. Sometimes your own happiness or unhappiness is dependant on what others think of you. It is an interesting question to explore: why have we empowered other people so much? In other words: they control you, in that the way they behave makes you happy or makes you unhappy. So your happiness and unhappiness is dependant exclusively on how others are relating to you. So why have we empowered other people so much?

RETREATANT: *Because we do not love ourselves.*

GODWIN: Exactly, exactly. As I said we suffer from a certain lack and then we try to conceal this lack from other people, because what we are not getting from ourselves, we are trying to get from others, and however much they do, it is not good enough, because the problem is here within us and not out there. And when you meet such people you feel very sorry, because all their life they are trying to satisfy others, but it is not possible to satisfy everyone. And the more they are trying to satisfy others, the more disappointed they become, because they think it is not happening, so they try more and more, and then more and more they become frustrated.

So do you realise the importance of making a connection with yourself? This is why I have been emphasising so much to learn to be your best friend. Then when you become your best friend, you become content within yourself, self-fulfilled within yourself. So then if that is there, you do not so much demand from other people, how they should behave, because you are content with yourself.

So these are some challenges we have in relationships in whatever form of relationships we have. It is interesting that through relationships wounds can be created, or hell can be created. At the same time what is beautiful is learning to have relationships in a creative way; this also can create lot of joy, a lot of happiness, a lot of fulfilment, if you can really know how to have relationships in a creative, positive way.

THE SUBLIME STATES

So maybe one approach which can give us lot of joy and happiness in relationships is that according to the Buddha's teaching, there are four qualities which can be used in a very creative way in relationships.

Sometimes when I am in the West I have been asked to organise a Buddhist wedding. Anyway I tell them: one definition of a Buddhist wedding is that you do not know what will happen next! Because in Sri Lanka nobody has asked me to organise a Buddhist wedding. So I had to think, what is the meaning of what we are doing in this ceremony. So one thing I try is: to talk to the couple about these four aspects of relating to each other. There are some beautiful words to describe these aspects: they are called the four *Brahma Vihara*. They are the sublime states, or divine states, because these qualities make you divine or sublime. These sublime qualities can be developed through working with these four aspects.

The first one is *Metta* — loving-kindness. I have been speaking a lot about it. With loving-kindness you can relate both to the positive qualities of the other person, and also to the so-called negative qualities of the person. So there is a kind of a very balanced attitude, and the other person also can have a similar relationship with you.

The other quality is what is called *Karuna* – compassion. *Karuna* is expressed in a situation where someone is suffering and you try to help the person who is suffering. In a relationship when you see the other person suffering, because you know what it is to suffer you can really relate both to your own suffering and to the suffering of the other; and in that situation you can really show care. This word caring is a very beautiful word. When you develop this quality of caring for others and when you see others hurt, when you see others unhappy, naturally there is a need to go and help the other person. So this is called *Karuna*.

The third quality is *Mudita* – sympathetic joy. Again it is a beautiful sounding word. It means, when others are happy, you can rejoice in the happiness of these other people. I think you should also have *Mudita* for yourself. So that when you are happy, to rejoice in your own happiness is very important. Because if you develop only *Karuna*, you are looking only for people who are suffering. And if there are no people suffering, you cannot practice *Karuna*.

Mudita is even more difficult to practice than *Karuna*. Because to really rejoice in the happiness of another person – it is very easy to feel for someone suffering – but to really feel happy that another person is happy is more difficult. To take a simple example: when you are meditating and there is pain, there is suffering, but you see others are sitting comfortably – it's not easy to feel happy in such situation, is it?

The last of these qualities is *Upekkha*, detachment, a non-reacting mind. In a relationship one should be able to respect the other person's space and be able to be aloof – not to be always demanding, wanting, desiring, but also learning to develop a kind of a non-reactive kind of detachment, this is very important. It is not being cold, as developing a non-reactive mind comes from understanding and not from a lack of feelings. Please see that clearly.

TAKING OTHER PEOPLE AS YOUR TEACHER

So another way of relating is to see the other person as your teacher, as your *guru*. So when you are with such a person, you feel grateful to that person because he or she is showing you a mirror. Try not to be angry with the mirror, but use it to look at yourself and to see what he or she is showing you.

Just to take an example: supposing it is your boss in the place where you are working. Then you can start experimenting, exploring. Now let me see today: when the boss behaves in this way, can I just look at myself, see what monsters will arise, see how long the monsters will be there? Just to see it as a very important learning opportunity, when I am with the boss. Then you are really looking forward to meeting the boss every Monday morning!

So afterwards you can start reflecting: Now this is the way I worked with my boss. Today I was angry for half an hour. Tomorrow let me go and see what will happen. Like this each day is very interesting, it is no longer a problem, it becomes a challenge, it becomes an interesting learning situation. You do not have to go away to do a retreat. The teacher is right there in the office. Then rather than hating him, you feel grateful and you find you can say: May he be well, may he also be peaceful.

How do we relate to difficult persons? Maybe in the place of work, maybe at home, maybe with the neighbours. Sometimes we are forced to live with such people, we are forced to work with such people. The real challenge then is: how to work with such people. How do we relate to such people?

DAY 4: RELATIONSHIPS

Now you might get the impression that we have to be always passive, always smiling, always practising loving-kindness in relationships. It does not work that way. Sometimes you need to be assertive, you need to be firm, you need to show your feelings.

So in this connection I have a favourite story to tell. The story is about a cobra. It comes from the Indian tradition. There was a cobra living in the forest, practising meditation of loving-kindness. This cobra was living there in the forest, saying: May all beings be well, may all beings be happy, may all beings be peaceful. Beautiful words. Beautiful-sounding words. Then an old woman, who could not see properly, was collecting some firewood, she came there but did not see the cobra clearly, she thought it was a rope. So she used the cobra to tie up the bundle of firewood. And because the cobra was practising loving-kindness, the cobra allowed her to do that.

So the woman carried the bundle of wood home. After a time this cobra escapes, but with a lot of pain, a lot of wounds on its body. So the next day the cobra went to have an interview with the teacher, and said: See, I practised loving-kindness, but look what happened to me! So the teacher very calmly said: No, you have not been practising loving-kindness. You have been practising idiotic loving-kindness. You should have hissed, you should have shown that you are a cobra!

So in relationships sometimes you need to hiss --- but, of course, you must know when to hiss.

DAY 5: FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

THE FIRST NOBLE TRUTH – SUFFERING

GODWIN: The Buddha often said: I teach suffering, and the way out of suffering. So the Buddha presented the Four Noble Truths which he discovered when he became enlightened for us to work with our suffering and to free ourselves from suffering. So, as you know, the first Noble Truth is the fact of suffering. And it is interesting how people suffer in different ways over the whole world. You know it is a fact. For example, in Asian countries like Sri Lanka there is great suffering due to poverty. In Western countries, especially rich Western countries, which can be considered as affluent, there is also a type of suffering which is called affluenza! You have heard of affluenza? Western affluenza?

So an interesting question arises: why is suffering called a Noble Truth? What is noble in suffering? What is your response to the question? Why is the fact of suffering called noble? Maybe because if we do not suffer, there is no need to find a way out of suffering. Only when we are sick do we need to find a medicine. So in that sense, it really is a noble fact, a Noble Truth. I would like to suggest that hereafter when you are suffering, as I said in the morning, you must say: here I am experiencing the fact of the first Noble Truth. It is a very interesting way of relating to suffering. So I hope, when you suffer, you will really know this.

THE SECOND NOBLE TRUTH – THE SOURCE OF SUFFERING

Sometimes, when I reflect on the Four Noble Truths, I feel the second Noble Truth is much more difficult, because it says that you must see very clearly that *you* are responsible for your suffering. It is not so easy, because what is easier is to blame others for your own suffering. That is what comes easily for us. So in that sense it is a very difficult, hard teaching for you to see and to take responsibility for how you are creating suffering yourself.

For this you have to really reflect, and you have to be really alert and awake when there is suffering to see this very clearly. So one needs to be very alert, awake, objective in working with the first Noble Truth. Maybe there are people who are suffering and do not know that they are suffering. It is like people who have a sickness and they do not know that they have a sickness. It is a dangerous situation. So you see the importance of experiencing the first Noble Truth.

And also when you reflect about the second Noble Truth, it is again very interesting, how we create our suffering in so many different ways. We have this tendency to demand things, to demand things from ourselves, to demand things from others, to demand things from life. So this demanding is one thing, but the reality is another. As long as there is this demanding, you may not be able to meet these demands you are making on others, on yourself, on your life. So this is how we are creating suffering for ourselves.

Another way, which I have been emphasising very much, because I think everyone can relate to this tendency, is to give ourselves minuses. So this being very critical, hard on ourselves, giving minuses all the time, this can be really a source of suffering in any situations.

According to the Buddha, the main cause of suffering is this idea we have that there is an 'I' or a 'me' in all this: that there is an ego. So the ego wants things his way or her way. The best way, I feel, to understand how the ego works is that we have this idea that I am Somebody. So it is really funny that the Somebody wants things his or her own way. The Somebody is such an important person. And when we have this idea, that we are a Somebody, it is very easy to be wounded, to be hurt.

Actually if you analyse the emotions, the emotions are created by this feeling of suffering. Take anger. If Somebody wants others to behave in his way, and then sees that others are not behaving according to his feeling of being Somebody, he gets angry, thinking: they should have behaved according to what this Somebody says.

We are amused. We think it is funny. But when we are Somebody, we do not feel it in that way. We are really hurt, we are really wounded, we are really despondent. Take fear. Fear is related to this. This Somebody might lose something and so Somebody has fear. What about anxiety? This is very important. Somebody might make mistakes. So you are anxious. And if Somebody wants only pluses from others – how can others give minuses to this Somebody? It is impossible. You see, when you analyse it this way, how absurd our behaviour is.

So to see this leads us maybe to develop this sense of absurdity, to see the absurdity of our self-importance. So this is very powerful, when you see the second Noble Truth in this way, how you are creating suffering for yourself; if you can see this clearly, then the way out of suffering also becomes clear to you.

THE FOURTH NOBLE TRUTH – THE PATH

Then you realise very clearly that only you can work with the suffering that you create yourself. And this is also very difficult, not so easy. To be completely self-reliant, to have complete self-confidence that as I am creating the sickness only I can find the medicine. So it calls for a lot of – what is the word? – courage, a lot of commitment, to see this, to think in these terms, to change your perception and your attitude. Again, it calls for having a lot of powerful and important qualities in our being.

Sometimes I define meditation in my own terms, that is: finding the medicine for the sickness we create ourselves. In a way, since we started the retreat we can say that what we have been trying to do is to discover the medicine. It is very nice, talking to some of you, and seeing the faces of some of you, that I find that the medicine is really working, is really helping. So what we have to discuss tomorrow is how to continue to take the medicine in everyday life. And sometimes the medicine can be very, very unpleasant. As you know, a medicine can be not so very sweet.

In practical terms, when we are meditating some things that arise within ourselves are not very pleasant to look at. I mean, this is the idea of retreats: in this practice of silence, in an intensive atmosphere, these things should arise. In everyday life there is no opportunity for these things to arise. But in such an intensive situation these things which we have not looked at, which we have denied, which we have pushed away become very clear, you start to see them.

That is why I have been encouraging you to bring up the monsters, because then you can really recognise the monsters you have, and you have an opportunity here to learn to work

with them and to find the medicine, how to work with them, which is very important. Again, something powerful, something beautiful happens, when you take the medicine and then you really see in your experience that the medicine is working.

Then what happens is, instead of suffering, another factor arises: there is more joy arising, more lightness arising, more understanding arising, more insight arising. That is the time when you develop more and more confidence in the medicine, and then you really have a sense of gratitude and respect for the Buddha who has discovered this medicine.

I would also like to encourage you that when you take the medicine yourself and when you are really seeing the result of the medicine, you make an effort to share the medicine with others. This helps you in your own practice too. I will be talking more about this, perhaps on the last day, or maybe tomorrow. And what is really beautiful about the Buddha's medicine is that we can use it in any situation in our life, for any form of sickness that may arise, the Buddha has found a medicine.

Even when you are sick, even when you are ill – I know some people who have been seriously ill, with fatal illnesses, which will eventually lead to their death – when one can use the medicine, one can relate to that illness in an entirely different way. It is something really inspiring.

I can never forget an experience I had in one of the countries I was visiting, I was giving a workshop on death and dying with a person who was suffering from Aids. He had written a wonderful Dhamma-book, which you should be able to get a copy of. The title of the book is 'In the Lap of the Buddha'. And the author, the person with whom I have given this workshop, is Gavin Harrison.

So before he had Aids, he was like a playboy. He was having a lot of money, a very good job, he was really enjoying life. Then suddenly he had Aids and the whole world that he was living in collapsed, and he was faced with the reality of what it is to die, which had escaped his mind completely. So when he was in this completely helpless and hopeless situation, fortunately he came across the Dhamma, fortunately he took to meditation.

And as he knew he was dying, he developed this sense of urgency to really make a strong commitment for the practice. He is still living now, the title of the workshop we did was 'Dancing with Aids'. So now with the practice he is able to really dance with life, handle life, because he has completely lost any fear of death and dying. And just listening to him, and the way he was sharing his experiences, and the way he was telling us how he was using the Dhamma and meditation, I told him directly, in front of every one: I genuinely feel that the fact that you have got Aids has been a great blessing!

So the point I want to make is, the beauty of the Buddha's medicine is that it can be applied to any problem in life, to any situation in life, in your life. As I was saying, it can be in relation to a sickness, it can be in relation to your own dying, or it can be in relation to someone else dying; it can be a problem of relationship, it can be any situation in life – if you have discovered the medicine you will be able to really apply it to any situation in life, nothing is excluded.

Actually in a way, there is nothing more we can add, other than to emphasise the importance of really making a commitment to take the medicine, and also to develop the capacity, the skill, to see the Dhamma, the Buddha's teaching, in any situation, in any problem that you have to face in life.

So tomorrow and the day after tomorrow we will be really going into this question, the problems you might have to face in everyday life. We can discuss how in such situations – it can be any situation in life – in what way we can use the medicine to learn to heal ourselves, or to free ourselves of the suffering that is here.

Learn to be a nobody who cannot be hurt. So from being Somebody, the solution that is offered is learning to be nobody. And when you are nobody, how can anyone hurt you? How can there be any suffering for nobody, because a nobody has no expectations, ideas, models of how things should be. He is going about life without making any demands. So how can such a person suffer in this world?

So with the Four Noble Truths you can work in this way, to use the first two in relation to suffering and to find the cause of suffering. And then when there is no suffering – I am sure you have experienced moments when there is no suffering – to realise why there is no suffering. When you know there is no suffering – you realise: I am not making any demands and am just learning to see things as they are. And this is what is resulting in the absence of suffering. So in everyday life if you can use the Four Noble Truths in this way, do you need anything else for your practice?

In any situation you can see: are you with the first Noble Truth, are you with the second one, or is there no suffering; and then what is the cause for no suffering? So isn't it within the reach of everyone of us, to learn to use the Four Noble Truths in everyday life in this way? If you have no time for sitting meditation, no problem. But if you can remember to remind yourself of these four aspects in everyday life in any situation, then you will be really using the medicine in a very effective and powerful way.

I think you asked the question yesterday about the Eight-fold Noble Path. In fact in the Four Noble Truths, the last Noble Truth is following the Eight-fold Noble Path. And the four sublime states – *Metta*, loving-kindness; *Karuna*, helping others in trouble; *Mudita*, sympathetic joy; and *Upekkha*, detachment, are also in a way part of the different aspects of the eight-fold Noble Path.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

So now to any questions you have.

RETREATANT: *Is life possible without suffering?*

GODWIN: Yes. The answer to that is, in one word: yes.

I know exactly what is meant by the question. I think there are some people – as it is rightly said – for whom to be alive, to know that they are existing, they need to suffer. So there are some people who only come alive when there is suffering. It is taking extreme forms in this modern world, especially in the area of violence. There are people who only when they do something violent come alive. This is their way of relating to people.

Did you read about how in a school in America schoolchildren shot at other schoolchildren? Did you read that? So this is being alive! This is the only way they learn how to relate to people, by using violence. So when you read these things, when you hear these things, it shows the real importance of the Buddha's teachings. It is showing an entirely different direction to living, to being alive.

And the question is this: how to help such people? It is extremely difficult to help such people because they are so strongly conditioned to live in this way and this is the only way they know how to live.

Any other questions?

RETREATANT: *How can we work with anger about noise?*

GODWIN: I am very happy this question is asked. Because in everyday life you will hear babies crying; you will hear all kinds of noises around you. So this is a very good preparation for everyday life. So how does a meditator work with such a situation? Very good question, very practical situation. On one occasion I said, what we have to learn in such a situation is to observe, to watch our own mind functioning, and not be so much involved in the source of the noise, what is happening externally, but what is happening within us. You have to see that if the suffering is outside, then we would have to change the whole environment, something which we can never succeed in doing. But according to the Buddha's teaching – it is very difficult – the answer is not to try to change the environment but to bring about a change in oneself, inside yourself, and then whatever happens in the environment does not affect you.

So it is a very beautiful thing, in such a situation just to watch your reactions, to watch your monsters arising: anger, minuses, and so on. Then what is important is, if you can have a glimpse even for a few minutes: that child is crying – but there is no reaction. Then you have the realisation of the first Noble Truth and the second Noble Truth, that the problem is not what is happening externally; the solution is in what is happening inside you.

I call this: the lawnmower principle. I will explain what this lawnmower principle is. When I was giving a retreat in a large centre one time, there was a group of very serious, intense, meditators, and in the garden of the centre a member of the staff was using a lawnmower.

One of the meditators got very angry. So he went to the boss, the director of the centre, and said: Please stop that man using the lawnmower. So the boss came running to me and said: Now what do I do? I said: Please allow him to continue to use the lawn mover. And then in the evening discussion I said: Tomorrow also we are going to hear the lawnmower. And when you hear the lawnmower, do not move away from the sound of the lawnmower. Make that the object of meditation and see how far you can make friends with the sound of the lawnmower.

The following evening, in the discussion, this man stood up and said: I am very happy to share with the group that I have now made friends with the lawnmower! And on the last day he even took a photograph of himself with the lawnmower! And he sent me a copy of the photograph. So I call this the lawnmower-principle: it is very important in everyday life. So I hope tomorrow all day the babies will cry! And when they all cry let us use the lawnmower principle.

RETREATANT: *How can we come out from playing the role of a victim?*

GODWIN: In such a situation this is where sometimes a kind of reflecting meditation can be very helpful. Because sometimes in such situations you can come to conclusions. You can believe certain things in such situations. But how far are they valid, how far are they objective? So to really reflect and see, how far is my conclusion objective? It is interesting, one way of creating our own suffering sometimes, is that we like to play the victim: see,

everyone has got together and done this to me! So poor me, I am the victim of other people's intrigues or whatever.

Are you really a victim, or did you create situations, which you might not be aware of, not be conscious of, where your own behaviour led to such a situation?

So this is why, when you can have a distance from such an incident, and if you can really reflect, you might be able to see that situation not only from one point of view, but from different viewpoints, from different angles. It is a very creative exercise to see something from different angles. We are so fixed with only one idea, one belief, we have not developed the skills of seeing it from different angles. One meaning of the Pali word *vipassana* is to see things in this way, with different perspectives. So such a reflection will enable you to see such a situation from different standpoints and not only from your one fixed conclusion.

And maybe it is also important to reflect: Is this a pattern in my life? Sometimes due to different situations we create certain patterns, and maybe in every job you ever had you have created a problem like this. So again to reflect: How far have I contributed to this? Is this a pattern in my life? So next time I get a job, I should be more conscious, more alert, more aware, so that I should not create this pattern, which maybe I am causing myself. So any more questions?

RETREATANT: *Isn't life diminished when we are not suffering?*

GODWIN: It is not an accurate way of describing life. Because what you have to understand is: when you have joy and absence of suffering, then still there is life! But the difference is that you relate to life in a different way. It is a wrong formulation to say that life is just suffering. A more correct way of saying it is: whatever has been conditioned is suffering. And when there is no conditioning there is an absence of suffering. So you can say while conditioning exists, this makes for suffering. That is a more accurate way of describing that statement. It brings us back to our practical problems in life.

RETREATANT: *How to work with anger due to a person who arrives late?*

GODWIN: You know, one solution is to come to Sri Lanka, because nothing and no one arrives on time! Not only human beings, but also trains come late, busses get late. You are lucky if there is a bus in the bus stand. So that kind of culture is very important for the practice. You cannot have any model, any expectation, of what should happen, because always it is very uncertain.

So when things happen on time, what happens is, it gives you a false sense of security: everything is under control. But life cannot be controlled. You really do not know what will happen in life. So the real security is to be open to insecurity, to be open to uncertainty. This is again a very hard, but a very deep teaching of the Buddha.

However, as you are not in Sri Lanka I will tell you how to function in Germany in such a situation. So here again it is the very same principle, to realise, to just watch, the reactions of your mind when the person is getting late. And in such a situation it is really fascinating to watch how with our thoughts we can create a huge story. It is fascinating to watch how we can use thoughts so destructively.

You can create a story in this way: this man is deliberately coming late, this man is consciously coming late. I know this man has always been punctual for other appointments,

only when he comes to my appointments is this man coming late. He is a strange man, he is a funny man, he wants me to suffer. Hereafter I will make no more appointments with him! So in this way, until he comes, you can create a huge story. And that story is one thing, and the reality is another thing. And if you ask him: Why did you get late? he might come up with a very sad thing that has happened to him in the morning. So we really do not know. You cannot know why he is getting late.

So you should be grateful to such people because they are teaching you patience, and they are teaching you what suffering you go through because of impatience. One very good principle, one very good advice to follow is, in such situations, not to be surprised. Why are we surprised? Because we think – again it's a demand that we are making – we know how things should be, how things must be. And when things do not go according to that principle, we get surprised.

Actually they are really very good learning experiences in such situations. So please, don't see such situations as a problem, but rather as an opportunity to observe and look at what is happening in your own mind. Then you will be ready to come to Sri Lanka! And then, in Sri Lanka, if you can also learn not to be surprised, you will be very close to enlightenment!

Anything else?

RETREATANT: *How to work with the eight-fold path?*

GODWIN: Actually there are eight aspects which are related to: right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. So this eight-fold path can be divided into three aspects, into three groups: the first is in relation to right actions, right behaviour, so it comes under morality, or in Pali *sila*, ethical behaviour. And another section is in relation to meditation, *samadhi*, or if you like, concentration. And the last stage is developing wisdom.

So it is a way to free ourselves of suffering, to develop our practice, where there will be ethical behaviour, moral behaviour, then cultivation of the mind through meditation, and then developing wisdom. When you develop these qualities, especially the quality of wisdom, then whatever happens, you learn to see things as they are. Or to put it in another way: you realise that there is no Somebody. So this is a way to find freedom, it is a way out of suffering, following this path, developing these qualities that I have mentioned.

SCHEDULE FOR THE NEXT DAY

So this brings up what we might try to do tomorrow. So tomorrow we will meet in the morning as usual, then there will be breakfast. Then there is working meditation. And after working meditation there is no schedule until we meet after the evening meal for a short sitting and the discussion. So all these past days we had this schedule: you come here, I sit in front of you with this bell and tell you, now stand up, now sit down, now do this, now do that. It is like a classroom. Although I am doing it, I do not really enjoy it. So tomorrow there is no classroom, you have to be your own teacher. You have to be self-reliant. You have to take responsibility for what you are doing.

So there will be no given structure tomorrow. You have to discover your own structure. So what I would suggest for tomorrow is to go over all the things that we have been trying to practice during the last few days. And then, when you go over them, please find out,

DAY 5: THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

whether you have any doubts, any difficulties. Then in the evening we will meet and I will be going over some of the techniques. So if you have any difficulties, any questions, please ask them frankly.

And reflect on some of the discussions we have had about emotions, about relationships, about suffering and overcoming suffering, and see how far you can really relate them to your life. Be clear whether you have discovered the medicine and whether you have any doubts about that. And again, if there are any doubts please, as we did today, you can even write them down, and then hand them over to Paul.

And as Paul and Joseph have been teaching you body-work, some physical exercises, try to go over them and find out whether you remember them. And again if you have anything to find out, you can ask questions from them, and they will be ready to help you.

I will be available in my room. So please come and see me any time that you would like to meet me. Tomorrow the interviews will be in Sri Lankan-style! So you do not have to write your names down. Just come, and when you come you might see someone else there. So watch your mind. Are you getting frustrated? Are you suffering? Are you becoming impatient? You can then come again later, and then there is another person there! This is preparation for everyday life, having an appointment with disappointment!

And please practise silence during the day until the evening meal. Please, make an effort to do that. Please try to do that, the practice of silence. And in the evening, when you eat your meal, you can start to talk. In the Eight-fold Noble Path there is reference to right speech. Speech is a very, very important area in everyday life. Silence is certainly important. But I would say speech sometimes is even more important. Most of the problems in everyday life are due to wrong speech. I am sure you know this very well.

So tomorrow, when you speak, please see whether you can speak with some awareness of what you are going to say. Please make an effort to do that. We can learn a great deal from our speech, if we learn just to be attentive, just to know if we have enough sensitivity to make an effort to understand our speech. And also another very important aspect of speech is learning to listen. So when other people speak, please make an effort to see if you can really listen to a person. With what Thich Nhat Hanh calls deep listening. It is a very, very important skill to learn: just to listen to another person. Amongst the problems in relationships one of the biggest problems is this lack of communication, because you are not really listening to the other person.

DAY 6: MEDITATION TECHNIQUES

LOVING-KINDNESS

GODWIN: Today I will talk about meditation techniques. So one technique is the meditation of loving-kindness. Does anyone have any problems with that meditation?

RETREATANT: *It is difficult to be friendly to oneself.*

GODWIN: I will offer some suggestions, how you might try to practice when you are on your own. One thing is when you have difficulties and cannot feel friendly to yourself, you have to be friendly to just that. You can say to yourself: So now, I cannot meditate on loving-kindness, but it is okay that I cannot practice meditation on loving-kindness. Otherwise what happens is we resist it, we dislike it, we hate it, we give ourselves a minus because we are unable to do that. But here, this is in a way being friendly to oneself by accepting what is.

Maybe another suggestion would be, when you have an unpleasant experience, maybe a physical pain, maybe a mental pain, in that situation can you can really say to yourself: I do not feel okay, but it is okay that I do not feel okay. So you have to remember this in such situations. It is again saying okay to it, accepting it, being friendly to it, without hating or disliking or resisting it.

So maybe another suggestion is – this practice is something which you may try to do in the morning when you wake up, just for a few minutes you can do this. You remember the quotation of the Buddha, that if you can practice meditation of loving-kindness during even the time that it takes to snap your fingers, you are worthy to be a monk. So in the morning just lying in your bed, try to think at that moment: May all beings be well and happy – include yourself – just for a few minutes, just to have thoughts of loving-kindness, thoughts of friendliness in the morning.

So another similar thought you can have in the morning is: Today may I get an opportunity to practice loving-kindness to someone else, may I get the opportunity to show kindness to someone this day. Just to have that thought, just to have that kind of aspiration, is a wonderful way of beginning the day.

Someone else said something very simple and significant, something similar to what the Buddha said, she said: we do not have to do a big thing to show loving-kindness. But little actions, small acts of loving-kindness are enough. So if you can have this openness, and if you can have this motivation, then in everyday life you are bound to find situations when you can smile at a person, smile at a child, showing some kindness. These small things, little things, are in a way acts of loving-kindness.

Another thing comes to my mind: those who are driving, when there is a red light, you have to stop your car. When you have to stop your car, what is the monster that comes up in your mind? If there is anger and impatience, you can say: I have anger now, I have impatience now, but it is okay. Simple: as I said, it is okay, I am having impatience, and I am having anger. Let me accept it, just as it is.

And if you can also look at the red light and say, may you be well! This is a powerful practice of loving-kindness. Little things, small things. I mean these little things, small things, can make such a difference. Also you can just picture your face when you are angry,

when you are impatient, and if you can do that, this can really make a difference. And then when you go to your office you go with a different state of mind: that little thing had helped you.

And maybe one last suggestion is to practice loving-kindness when you go to sleep, as we have been doing every night in this retreat. As I said before, there are three benefits to doing meditation of loving-kindness before you go to sleep: you sleep peacefully, you wake up peacefully, and you do not see nightmares. So when you go to bed – everyone has to go to bed every night – just for a few seconds say: May I be well, may I be happy, may I sleep peacefully, just have these thoughts of loving-kindness until you fall asleep.

Are these things difficult, impossible? From all these what is the most difficult one?

RETREATANT: *When I realise I have forgotten to do it!*

GODWIN: Ah, that is good. So when you have forgotten, this is where you have to have reminders. Now, I know some of you have computers. There is a device that you are using on computers, some peep, peep, peep. This would be very nice to have a special peep in the computer, so that when you hear that peep you can associate it with: Ah, now it is time to do loving-kindness meditation. Then you will be using the computer in a very meaningful way.

For those who do not have a computer: I have seen in some places, some meditating monks have written in a place where they can be reminded of these things: Remember to meditate on loving-kindness. I know a meditating monk who lives in a forest. When I visited him, I saw on his door the words: Open the door mindfully. He told me: every time he opens the door, he sees that and he does it very consciously.

It is funny the things we forget and the things we remember. Do you forget to brush your teeth in the morning? No? It is also good to find out what you remember and what you forget, it is a very important area: to work with our memory.

RETREATANT: *Thich Nhat Hanh suggests to practice meditation whenever there is a red light.*

GODWIN: What a beautiful idea without getting impatient, without getting angry, you learn to use that as a device to stop whatever you're doing and to focus on your breath or whatever.

So in everyday life we need to think of such devices, such techniques or similar exercises which will help to remind us of meditation, because it is quite common that we forget. So because we forget, we should think of such very simple, practical devices.

OBJECTLESS MEDITATION

Another technique that we practised was meditation without an object. Any questions about that?

RETREATANT: *What is the role of awareness in the objectless meditation?*

GODWIN: So what happens when we learn to meditate with an object is it becomes very easy to come back to that object. But I think it is very important also to slowly, slowly learn to forget about having any object, and to allow the mind to do what it likes, just watching, just observing what the mind is doing.

In a way, what the mind is doing can be seen as an object. Let me take an example: When you allow the mind to do what it likes, then you realise that you are thinking. So thinking at that time becomes the object. The difference is, you do not get fixed, you do not focus on that thinking, but in a very loose, natural, relaxed way you allow the mind to do what it likes. Then from the thoughts it might move to a sound. When it moves to the sound, then you know: Now you are with that object; and then after a few seconds you come to the body, some sensations in the knee. So this is allowing the mind to scan, like in computer language: scanning.

So this can be done very easily in everyday life. For example you go to the office in the morning and you just sit there for a few minutes, you just allow the mind to do what it likes. Then you realise that you are seeing things, hearing things, just knowing what the mind is doing. So you can do it anywhere. In Sri Lanka sometimes I tell Sri Lankans, you can practice this waiting for a bus, getting in the bus, travelling in the bus, and even if you miss the bus! This is really objectless meditation.

RETREATANT: *What is the border between daydreams and objectless meditation?*

GODWIN: For this technique you have to be very alert and awake. So this is why I presented first learning to focus on an object, so that your mind becomes sharp and clear and awake – this is very important – and then with such a mind you can practice objectless meditation. And then when the daydream starts, you can realise: Ah, the daydream is starting. What is more important is that by observing the thoughts when a story arises, when you are creating a story, you will be able to see it. Sometimes seeing it helps us to recover from it. So for this practise you need a lot of alertness and a state of being awake. And if that is not present, what you might try to do is to get some clarity and some awareness by focussing on the breath. Then you can start again.

REFLECTION

So another thing which I emphasised very much during the last few days, I encouraged you very much to do is reflection. So please learn to practice reflection. Especially reflection about your behaviour, reflection about your words, reflection on how you are in relationships, how you are interacting with people, the problems that you might create for them. So to just know that, just reflect on your behaviour, is a very important thing.

Also I encouraged you to use the Four Noble Truths in your everyday life. To do this, one really has to use reflection. So I will give an example: When you are suffering, when you are hurt, angry, disappointed, at that moment you have to learn to reflect: Why I am angry? What is the cause of this? What is the expectation that I am having? What is the model that I am holding onto? So this kind of reflection enables you to see very clearly how you are creating suffering for yourself.

And this kind of reflection can naturally bring about a transformation in oneself. It also enables us to look at ourselves rather than look at other people. So when you learn to reflect and look at your own behaviour more and more, you see more clearly your monsters, your shortcomings, your failures – and maybe some positive aspects also!. Then that will really help you in relation to other people, when you see the shortcomings of other people: Ah, they are just like me and I am also like them. So you can have a real feeling of oneness with your fellow human beings, and see that we are all just a group of imperfect human beings.

What is important about reflection is that you not only see your shortcomings or failures, but you will learn to see your positive qualities also. You have to have a very good balance to really see yourself objectively just as you are. It is very important to see both your failures and your so-called successes also.

MEDITATION IN EVERYDAY LIFE

So now any questions about the difficulties you have in everyday life? You can present practical situations and ask how does one use meditation in such a situation. This will be a very useful exercise. And if you can do this, present just simple, practical situations relating to life, we can discuss how we can use meditation in such situations.

RETREATANT: *How can we use computers without getting confused?*

GODWIN: Very good. I like such practical questions.

You should see the computer as a tool. If you can learn to play with your computer you will never become nervous about it. You become nervous because you do not want to make mistakes. So just to see, this is my computer, this is my tool. This is a kind of loving-kindness. Just touch it and say: my good old tool; I have a special relationship with you; I am about to amuse myself with you. This is loving-kindness. I have never handled a computer in my life – but if you can have this connection with the computer you will really enjoy it. Like a child you might really look forward to using it. This is one suggestion. Do you think this is possible? Good, very good.

But supposing you do get nervous, supposing you get angry, then you can say: very good, you are teaching me how to work with getting nervous, you are teaching me how to work with anger. So again feeling grateful for this tool that is bringing up these monsters. And then you can maybe stop using the computer and just focus on the monster: Now what are the tools that I can use now?

So you have a very special connection with the computer because it is your spiritual friend. It is your teacher which you can take around and also which can teach you how to work with your monsters. This is very interesting, to have a relationship, to have a connection, with the things that you are using. I told you the story of the Buddha who spent 7 days showing his gratitude to the Bodhi tree which helped him while he was struggling to get enlightened. See the connection he had with the Bodhi tree.

One of my favourite Zen poems is in the book: *One Robe, One Bowl*, by Ryokan. So this monk had only one robe, one bowl. He had a very special connection with the bowl. In one of the poems he says that one day he forget his bowl, and later when he remembered it he found it and said: Oh, my bowl you must be lonely without me! What a beautiful connection he has with the bowl. It is like having a spiritual friend, a special kind of relationship with the bowl.

I have a very interesting friend in Sri Lanka. He is professor of philosophy, a very interesting person. He has a special connection with his car. He has an old car and he does not want to sell it and buy a new car, because he says he has a very special connection with it, he talks to his car! When I am in the West I hear of the car talking with people. But here this man, he talks to the car. So sometimes it would break down, he would ask it: What's the problem? He has such a connection with his car it is like whatever has happened to the car has happened

to him. We were out driving one day. Suddenly the car broke down and then he went to fix it and while doing that he was talking to his car!

One day it broke down and when he had fixed it, he came and told me: Do you know why it broke down today? Because I had not been talking to him, so now, the car is talking to me! See the beautiful way he has of looking at it. Rather than seeing it as a problem, seeing it as a difficulty, a source of suffering, instead seeing that my car realised I needed a good talking to!

You must see the rules that Buddha laid down for the monks. How he gave details about how to use the robes, how to use the bowls, and so on... I mean again he had a beautiful, personal connection with the things that he was using.

So the word that comes to my mind is learning to care for the things that you are using. I have been answering questions about everyday life, is there anything else?

RETREATANT: *I get sad at the loss of a car.*

GODWIN: So, whether we have to take a human being to the graveyard or whether we have to take a car to the graveyard one has to work with the sadness in the same way.

RETREATANT: *I like to give a name to the things I am using, e. g. Bhikkhu for a car which is yellow.*

GODWIN: And it is very beautiful because you have to respect a Bhikkhu! Any other questions about everyday life and meditation?

WORKING WITH VARIOUS EMOTIONS

RETREATANT: *How should we work with sadness at the loss of someone close to us?*

GODWIN: That's a very good and practical question. I will give one or two suggestions. One is, in Sri Lanka I meet a lot of people who suffer from grief, because they had lost a child, or some friends who were very close to them. So one of the exercises I give them, which normally helps them, is, whenever you think of the dead person, rather than suffer and feel grief, you can say: Wherever you are now, may you be well, may you be happy, may you be peaceful, may you be free of suffering.

Also I like to ask the question: When you think of your friend, when you realise that you could not say goodbye, what is the emotion that comes up? What is the emotion? Sadness. So here again this is why I have been giving you tools to work with emotions. In everyday life we are bound to have such emotions, and what is creating the emotions can have so many different reasons. But the point is not what is creating the emotion; what is more important is how to work with the emotion. So if it is sadness use the tools so that when you think of that friend instead of having sadness, you will be having loving-kindness. That is enough.

Anything else? I like questions about things which we have to experience in everyday life.

RETREATANT: *What should we do about fighting with words?*

GODWIN: Now, does this mean fighting with words or with the hands also? The mouth is enough. So then it is very easy. In other words, you have very strong arguments, a quarrel.

Here again we can all relate to this. In everyday life we have to face this situation, in relationships this is bound to arise.

So one thing is – perhaps it might be too much to expect – but when you are fighting like this, if you can remember awareness, if you can remember your breath. A very good exercise is just to go to the bathroom and look at your face. If you can remember to do some of these things, they might be helpful.

But this might be difficult, you might forget them in that intense moment, so what might be attempted is, at least later on, after you have recovered from that anger, after you have recovered from that confrontation, just to reflect: Now what really happened to me? What were the words that I used when I was really angry and shouting and fighting? Did I really mean those words when I really shouted and used those words, did I really mean them, or did I use them merely because I got angry?

And then you reflect: How long did it take for me to recover from that state of mind? So if you can do this kind of reflection, and then later on when you have recovered, if you can really have loving-kindness – to go and speak to that person and to have a real contact with that person: Now what really happened to the two of us? Now this is what really happened to me. So you must really open up to that person and speak honestly. Then that person will say: Oh interesting, this is what happened to me.

And if you can have a connection like that with such people, as I said when I spoke about relationships – this is a spiritual relationship, it can grow, and this is a beautiful relationship where you are growing together, where you are learning together from your quarrels, your fights. So they become the objects of meditation. If you can do this then neither person will carry a wound. In a light-hearted way you can come to an agreement: Let us have these quarrels once a month! And then after fighting you do such a kind of meditation.

When I travelled in the West, I became very interested in the latest developments of psychotherapy and so on. In Switzerland I heard of a new psychotherapy for couples. According to this therapy when a couple go to a psychotherapist and say: We are fighting, he never says: Stop fighting. He tells the couple: You must start fighting every Saturday at 9 p.m. And if this is not enough, if once a week is not enough, try to fight on Wednesday at 9 p.m. also. Can you guess, what happens then? They can laugh at themselves. That's very good therapy. I must start this when I go back to Sri Lanka. In the schedule we will have a time for fighting! So this kind of humour brings a lightness. It is very important, if one can do that in such situations in life.

As I was saying: we take life too seriously. One day I was sitting with a meditating monk in Sri Lanka and we were chatting and he said something very interesting. He said: sometimes I see life as a joke. And then he added very seriously: Sometimes it can be a bad joke. Then he said: But still it is a joke.

Anything else as a solution for fights? Anything else about meditation? To work with fights. One question was about computers, anything else? This is good, I am learning also.

REVIEWING MEDITATION

RETREATANT: *What is the best tool to remember the tools?*

GODWIN: So it is interesting that on one occasion the Buddha said: The importance of spiritual friends is that we have the tendency to forget things, especially forget the Dhamma, forget the techniques, and he said: This is the function of very good spiritual friends, to remind each other when we forget. So it is interesting that even this kind of forgetting has been an old problem! So this was presented by the Buddha on one occasion.

So one suggestion I would like to offer is – this could be a very good exercise – a kind of review, what is called a review meditation: So each evening, even after work, if you are feeling very tired and exhausted, you can just sit somewhere in a very relaxed position and just review, go over what had happened during the day. This has to become a kind of habit, so that even if you cannot do it every day, at least once in two days in the evening. Maybe you can make a note somewhere so that it can really help to remind you in the evening to do this reviewing.

And in this reviewing what is important is go over the good things you have done during the day. And then also to remember the situations where there were emotions, where monsters arose during the day. In doing this it brings up very good insight, good understanding, about how you spent the day, and the different things which have happened; and it is very objective because you go through not only the wrong, bad, things but you also remember the good things.

And in doing that you review: Now today I got angry around 9 o'clock in the morning and it was there for about one, or half an hour, and what did I do during that time? So maybe you forgot the tools. So now that is the time to remember: today I forgot the tools, and this is what happened to me, that is okay, but let me use the tools now. Ah, these are the tools. And then the next day – this can be very amusing and entertaining sometimes – you are waiting to get angry, you are waiting for the monsters to arise, and you are remembering to use the tools. And what is paradoxical is, when you are waiting for the monsters to arise, they normally do not arise. And if they arise, because you are ready with the tools, you might remember to employ them at that time.

So if you can remember to do this review meditation everyday or – as I said – once in two days, you have a simple device. Then two beautiful things will be happening: One is that you will have a very good understanding about how you are spending the day and you see not only the negatives, you will also see the positive things, that are happening to you. That's number one. The second beautiful thing is that each evening, because you are going over the tools you are prepared for the next day.

You can also use the Buddha's advice in this connection, where you could say maybe to your partner, your friend, or whoever is at home, just to remind each other: Now when you get angry or when you have this emotion, I will try to remind you of the tools. And please, when I get angry, please remind me of the tools. This would be a wonderful spiritual relationship.

If there is nothing else, we can do some chanting and maybe we can discuss tomorrow. So I think we will have the early morning schedule. Then I think after the working meditation is over we can meet for a last sitting at 10 or 11, and we can also have a small discussion. Again

I might think of things about how to integrate meditation into everyday life, and the retreat will come to a close at lunch.

So I would like to tell you that tomorrow is going to be a very important day. Please do not think that tomorrow is the last day, and then we are going home, because I would like to offer some suggestions, how you can really use tomorrow, it can be seen as a real preparation for going back to everyday life. So from tomorrow morning you can start to talk. And today you might have found how difficult it is to talk with awareness.

TALKING WITH AWARENESS

So tomorrow please make an effort, just to remind yourself: Am I talking with awareness, am I really listening to another person? Please try to use speaking tomorrow in the context of the practice as far as possible.

And one thing I have noticed today is the tone of the voice. So it is interesting that when we start to talk how we suddenly forget the tone, and sometimes we are even shouting. It is funny: we start very softly and then after some time we are shouting! Only others can hear that, you do not realise your tone of voice yourself. So tomorrow be conscious of the tone of your voice.

Because in quarrels in everyday life, one thing that always changes is the tone of the voice. You can investigate: when there is a quarrel, how does the tone change? That is something very interesting to watch and also to listen to. Also when you are talking, just to pay some attention to what is being talked about, just to know what is being spoken about.

And tomorrow I know that when you start working meditation, your speed will immediately change; like with the speaking, we are walking, we are doing things very, very fast. Because you have maybe only a limited time. You cannot do everything, so you suddenly get very, very busy, do things quickly. In that situation, see whether you can remind yourself: Now can I slow down a little?

It is a very interesting experiment, even on the street you can try this, suddenly if you have time you say to yourself: Now let me walk slowly, just for five minutes. Immediately there is a change, a difference in what is taking place in you, as soon as you make an effort to slow down what you are doing. Please experiment with this tomorrow.

Another suggestion I would like to offer is, especially when you clean your room tomorrow, before leaving, please feel grateful that you have had this opportunity to occupy the room during the last few days. Can you see whatever you are doing for the room as an act of loving-kindness to the next person who comes to this room: May he or she feel good, feel happy, may he or she find the room in a very nice condition.

DAY 7: EVERYDAY LIFE

GODWIN: One interesting point to reflect on is the fact that we have to do so many things to keep our body healthy. We never say that one has to forget these things. We never say that they are difficult. But we have given such priority, such importance to keeping our bodies healthy.

But what will we do to keep our mind healthy? And when medicine is offered to keep your mind healthy, then you might forget it. Sometimes we give reasons, but it is interesting to find out, why is there this difference? Why don't we consider them equally important or consider the mind even more important? Sometimes I invite friends in Sri Lanka to come to the meditation centre, and they have many reasons why they are not able to come and so on. But if a doctor tells them: You have to enter the hospital immediately, you need to take some very important tests, they would not tell the doctor: No, no, I have so much to do, I cannot come!

PRIORITIES

So what we have to do is remember the priorities that we have made in life. We have to be very clear in our minds about this. The priorities we have in life – it is okay to have different priorities – but what is the priority we have given to the spiritual life? So I would say, everything revolves around that question.

Another aspect of this is to explore the question: How to find a motivation, an interest for meditation, in everyday life? There I would say, I think much depends on the way we relate to meditation. If we can find meditation interesting, if we can experience meditation as discovering, learning, experimenting, exploring, then we have a different relationship to meditation. Because if you are enjoying something, if you find it interesting, then naturally you feel like doing it.

One thing that prevents us from having this connection is having strong expectations about results. In this connection the Buddha has said something very beautiful, very interesting. He says: When a gardener plants some trees, plants and so on, if he is a good gardener, he should enjoy what he is doing and he should not be concerned or worried about when the flowers will bloom, thinking: Are the flowers coming? are the vegetables coming? Because then he loses that joy and liveliness and the fun of it. But if he can really enjoy what he is doing, find it interesting, find it challenging – that is good enough.

So in everyday life if you can enjoy working with the monsters, discovering about the monsters, making friends with them, seeing them as a challenge, then the monsters will leave you alone. But until then can you find it interesting, challenging, something meaningful to do?

It is okay to have a goal in life. In meditation maybe we have a particular goal, we want to achieve the end of suffering. But I would like to suggest that you forget the goal when you are practising. There is a simile that comes to my mind: if a man is climbing a hill and all the time he is thinking what will happen when he reaches the top of the hill, he cannot enjoy what is happening when he is in the process of climbing.

So what is more important is what is happening in the process of climbing. You have falls, you have injuries, you see some beautiful things, sometimes you see ugly things. What is important is the process of climbing, not what happens at end of the climbing, at the end of the practice. In the practice there should be just what is happening right now, and not what is going to happen after some time, the results and the changes, but just enjoying what is happening right now, from moment to moment, as far as that is happening in everyday life.

And in the process of climbing, in the process of our practice, sometimes we might fall. Some times we have a big problem, a big crisis, and then we forget meditation, and then we are really affected by what has happened in a certain situation. So when such a thing happens, please do not get surprised. One of my Sri Lankan friends describes the spiritual path as like climbing a coconut tree. When you climb a coconut tree, sometimes when you come to the top and are within reach, you are very close to the fruit, suddenly – boom! – it falls down.

So my friend tells me: In the process of climbing you go up and you go down, what is important is not to get down from the coconut tree but to be in the tree – it doesn't matter whether you're climbing up or you are climbing down.

SPIRITUAL FRIENDS

Another thing which will help us in our practice is to have a group of spiritual friends. Some of you who are living close by are very fortunate to have this Centre, so that you can come here for weekly sitting classes, meet teachers, meet Paul. So this can be very good for your practice. It is always good to have some spiritual friends. So if you do not have such a place, maybe you can sit with your family, relate to your family or some friends, some neighbours, as your spiritual friends, it can even be just 2 or 3 people, but what is important is to meet regularly. Sit with them, talk with them, sharing can be a very helpful thing for our practice.

Something which I like to emphasise very much is the importance of taking the medicine yourself, and then also finding time to share this medicine with others. There are a lot of people suffering in this world, and I think there will be more and more suffering for different reasons. So if we have discovered how to work with this situation, we should really make an effort to share that with other people who are suffering. Just to tell others when you meet: This is what I am doing, this is the medicine I am taking, these are the results I am having, and so on, and then just encourage them to try it out.

You can invite some of these people to your house and then you can really start a small spiritual group, even 2 or 3 people. And that can be something very helpful to you, something helpful to others and this will also keep you on the coconut tree. Because we need a kind of reminding, a help from other people, this spiritual friendship is something very beautiful. We are growing together, helping each other. Because otherwise our mind can be very subtle, it can play very subtle tricks on us.

I can tell you what I mean. Now in Sri Lanka, a Sri Lankan might come and spend some time at the Meditation Centre, and then when they leave the place they say: Now I am going to really make a commitment to the practice. I'm going to get up, as we get up in the Centre, at 4.45 in the morning. And then he leaves the place with a lot of inspiration, a lot of commitment and devotion to the practice. After some time I meet him and I ask him: How is the practice? Do you still get up at 4.45? Ah, he tells me, the first week I got up at 4.45, the

second week or the third week the thought came: Godwin said: We must be kind to the body!

So you see how we use the Dhamma to do what we like, this is what I mean by playing tricks. The mind can be really very subtle. So you have to have the tricks, know the tools, to trick the mind yourself, otherwise it will definitely trick you. I ask him: Do you do any sitting meditation now? No, he replies, because you said that one can practice awareness without sitting!

Now I would like to say something about sitting meditation. I mean if you can sit maybe in the morning for some time and in the evening, it is a good habit to cultivate. But if you are unable to sit, please do not think that that is the end of the practice. This can easily happen. You think, I do not feel like sitting and then when you give up sitting, you give up the practice of meditation also. This is why I emphasise the practice of reflection, which you can do without sitting: the importance of learning to look at your thoughts, your emotions, your state of mind, so that you can learn to do this in everyday life.

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS IN EVERYDAY LIFE

This is why I also emphasise that we can use the Buddha's Four Noble Truths in everyday life. I think it can be a very powerful practice. Any time during the day while you are working or doing anything, you can just ask yourself: Now, what is happening? Am I with the first Noble Truth, am I with the second Noble Truth or am I with the third or the fourth? You can just ask these questions as constantly as possible during the day, and this is more than enough for your practice, I would like to say.

What a beautiful way to live, just reminding yourselves, just being with the Buddha's Four Noble Truths as often as possible during the day. And what is more beautiful, and what is more effective is, in any situation in life – I would emphasise in any situation in life – you can apply the Four Noble Truths, and if you can do that you can see Dhamma everywhere, you can see Dhamma in any situation.

So I would like to emphasise that when there is any situation where you are suffering, just reflect and find out what is the cause that is creating the suffering. And immediately you will see: this in the beauty of the Buddha's teaching. Not in the future, but just at that moment you will realise: This is because I am having the idea of wanting it my way, wanting it differently, resisting what is actually happening, not seeing something just as it is.

And during moments when there is freedom from suffering, try to remember, to remind yourself, to ask: Why is there an absence of suffering? Immediately you will see: because there is no attachment, there is no desire, there is no more wanting, there is no liking, there is no disliking. So immediately you can see what conditions are creating that freedom from suffering.

So is there any reason why you are unable to do this? What is beautiful about the Buddha's teaching is that practice is really within the reach of any human being who has the motivation in that direction.

QUESTIONS ABOUT MEDITATION IN EVERYDAY LIFE

So again are there any questions that you have, especially about the challenges, the problems, you are encountering in everyday life?

RETREATANT: *You have said we should investigate the moments when we are free of suffering. Sometimes I am free of suffering or happy, but I am looking forward to something that I am going to enjoy. What about this?*

GODWIN: It all depends on what you are looking forward to. If you are looking forward to some pleasurable thing that you are longing for, at that moment you will feel some excitement, you will feel some pleasure arising, thinking: Maybe when I have that I will really enjoy it. And what is very significant is, when you get it, what next? What is beautiful about the first Noble Truth is, one way suffering is created is not getting what we want. I think we can all relate to that. But what happens when the next step comes, when we do get something we want? – This is a very, very deep teaching of the Buddha – when you get what you want, what is the next step? Wanting something different? Wanting something more? So this longing continues and at the end of it there is still dissatisfaction and discontent.

This aspect is very clearly presented in a beautiful and powerful simile in one of the Buddhist texts: it is like when you have a wound you feel like scratching it, and when you scratch it you get a nice feeling, a very pleasant feeling, and you continue to scratch, but the wound never heals. So if you really want to heal the wound, you have to stop scratching and go through that unpleasant sensation and from that something healing can arise.

SEXUALITY

Now this reminds me that I wanted to speak about sexuality on the day we discussed relationships, but we got so much involved that day that even I forgot about it, and I think you must have forgotten also, otherwise you would have talked about it. Because sexuality is one of these issues in everyday life, a very big issue. So does anyone have any problems about sexuality? Any questions about sexuality?

RETREATANT: *I have found out something and I do not know why it is: When I am in a relationship and it is just friendship, sometimes it happens that the friendship is very open. But as soon as sexuality comes in, it changes and I do not know why.*

GODWIN: You have not discovered why. And what may be the possible reasons for this do you think? The wanting? Expectations? Maybe another aspect related to that is, now when generally speaking there is an open friendship perhaps we do not make so many demands from the other person, but in a sexual relationship I think what might be happening is, the other person is used as a kind of investment, because – as I said in relation to the wound – the pleasure that you get from the other person, sometimes that is the only aspect in it. When that happens there can be problems, because you do not see other aspects of the relationship, but only this one aspect. So this can give rise to conflicts as both are only getting pleasure from each other, and there is nothing else.

One thing that I emphasise is these four aspects I mentioned previously, what are called the four sublime states. Even in a relationship where sex is involved, I think if you can use some of these four aspects it can be extremely helpful. So there is *Metta*: general concern, general

caring, friendliness to each other. It goes deeper than just pleasure. Because what is involved is a kind of real genuine caring.

Then *Karuna*, compassion: so that when another person is suffering, you really feel for that person. So there is an immediate response to that suffering. And it can be mutual, so that when someone is suffering you help them, and when you are suffering the other person helps you. So this is a beautiful way of having a relationship in any form, where you are helping each other in such situations.

And the other beautiful quality is sharing happiness *Mudita*, so just to really see the other person happy and for the other person to see you happy. This is the complete opposite of envy and jealousy. Especially the element of jealousy, which can really create problems, this is the complete opposite of jealousy, where there is a real sympathetic joy for each other. And the last quality you can really use very creatively is where you respect each other's space. So these can be four very important guidelines for one to use in relationships, whatever the relationship is, it can be sexual or even if sexuality is not there.

Do not feel bad if you have sexual desires. Do not feel guilty about them. According to the Buddhist model, it is only when you have attained the 3rd stage of sainthood that sexual desire drops away completely. This is one point I would like to make. Another point is: do not see sexual desires as something different from other desires. We should ask ourselves: Why have we made a problem out of sexuality? When we have other desires it is not such a problem, but this one! We give it such power, such energy, and then we become victims of it. So what is necessary, is to take away the power and the energy and just to see it as any other challenge, and just to work with it as in the case of other emotions. So in this retreat we have discussed all problems: sexual problems, relationship problems, emotional problems.

Also I would like to say there can be a beautiful closeness, an intimacy without sexuality. I think this can be a beautiful relationship. In fact one of the Zen-masters has described enlightenment as feeling intimate with all things. So you can have an intimacy in that sense with people but the fact of sexuality may not enter into it.

AVOIDING THE TWO EXTREMES

Generally speaking there are two extremes: one extreme is repression, the other extreme is complete expression. This can be related to anger: sometimes we repress anger, sometimes we express it. So one way of working with this is to avoid both these extremes, which means in practical terms neither repression – so you allow any thoughts or feelings to arise – nor expression, instead just allowing it, just being aware of it, just creating space around it.

Some people consider certain things bad. People who consider sexuality bad, they give it a minus – they repress it. People who consider it as something good, give it a plus – they express it. As I have often said: We should have no plusses, no minuses, just seeing it as it is.

Sounds very simple, very simple.

Maybe we could end with a well known Chinese story, which I like very much: There was a wise old man living in a village in China and he had some beautiful horses. One day one of the beautiful horses went missing. So the people in the village came and told this old man: Oh, this is bad *karma*. This is something very unfortunate, that you have lost the most

beautiful horse you had. He said: Relax, relax. No need to give a minus to that. I have just lost a horse, that is all.

Then after some time this beautiful horse returned with another beautiful horse. So now he has two horses. Then his friends came and said: Now it must be a good *karma*, you are very, very fortunate, you lost one horse, but now you have 2 horses. He said: Relax, relax. No need for a plus. I now have two horses, that's all.

He had only one son. So the son started to train this new horse and what happened? His son broke his leg because the horse was very aggressive. Some times this can happen: good *karma* changes into bad *karma*. His friends came again, and said: So now your only son has broken his leg, that's very bad *karma*. He said: Relax, relax. My son has broken his leg, that's all.

Then there was a war, and the army people came looking for young people to take into the army. When they came to this man's house, they could not take the son because his leg was broken. But all his friends lost their sons because they were taken away. They said: What a fortunate man you are! You are the only man whose son has been saved, and all because of his broken leg, you have very good *karma*!

Now this is the Buddha's teaching — just to see things as they are.

Anything left? Enlightenment. Enlightenment. Here I would like to present a very simple, practical aspect of the Buddha's teaching that we can use in our daily practice. In simple terms, enlightenment is the absence of suffering. It sounds so ordinary. But this should be the most important issue in our lives.

It is a very simple, direct, practical area to work with. When there is suffering just to make that the object of meditation, to see it as the first Noble Truth. And then applying the fourth Noble Truth, so then you can relate to the suffering in an entirely different way. Thus in this way, working with it as the Buddha said: little by little, slowly, slowly, we can get to a state, where suffering becomes less and less, which means we are also getting closer and closer to enlightenment.

This is enough.

So may every one here little by little, slowly, slowly, become free of suffering. And there are two nice sounding Pali words for this: *thokam thokam khane khane* — Slowly, slowly, little by little.

So now we can do some nice chanting and after that we will see what happens. There has been some beautiful chanting here — it is very nice. I enjoy it so much, it is beautiful to be in a group chanting together.