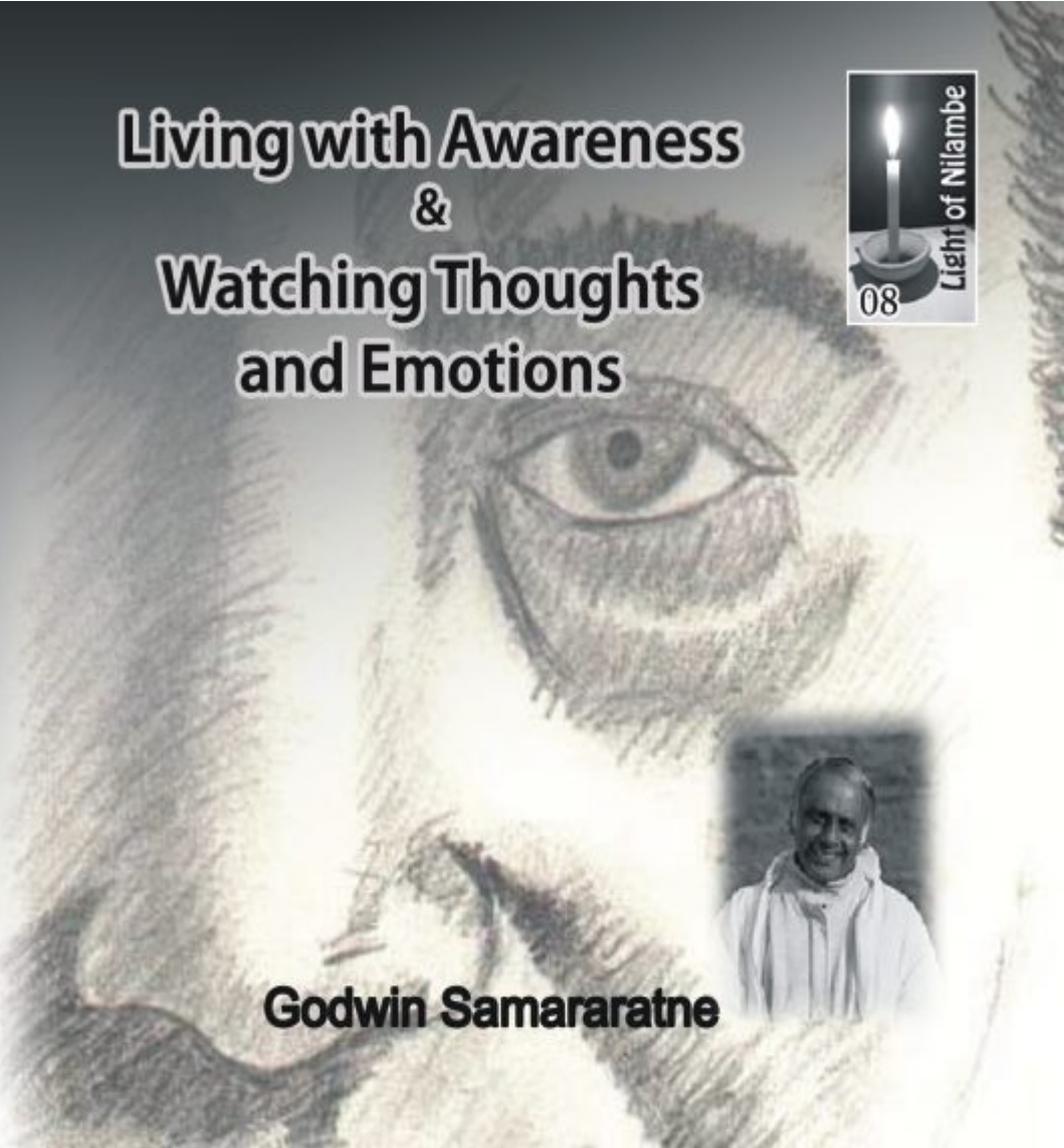


# Living with Awareness & Watching Thoughts and Emotions

A large, detailed pencil sketch of a human face, focusing on the eyes and nose, serves as the background for the entire cover.A small, rectangular inset photograph of a man with a beard, wearing a light-colored hoodie, smiling. He is identified as Godwin Samararatne.

**Godwin Samararatne**

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

-Godwin Samararatne



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Light of Nilambe



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&  
WATCHING THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS**

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Published by

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Nilambe, Sri Lanka

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## CONTENTS

OUR TEACHER GODWIN, A SHORT BIOGRAPHY	7
1. LIVING WITH AWARENESS	9
2. WATCHING THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS	53

## Previous Publications of Light of Nilambe

1. What is human life?
2. Be an outsider if you want to change the inside
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## **OUR TEACHER GODWIN, A SHORT BIOGRAPHY**

Acarya Godwin Samararatne was one of the best known lay meditation teachers in Sri Lanka in recent times, based at his meditation Centre at Nilambe in the central hill country near Kandy. After his death in March 2000, letters and tributes poured in as many people around the world attested to the impact that Godwin and his teaching had made on their lives.

Godwin was born 6th September 1932. He grew up as one of seven children in a Kandy-based family, in the central hills of Sri Lanka. He attended a well-reputed Buddhist school, but later admitted to neglecting his studies there in favour of exploring the deeper philosophical questions of life. After school he became a Librarian, serving in libraries in and around the Kandy area before being promoted to the post of Chief Librarian at the main Kandy Public Library.

While his brothers and sisters all married, Godwin remained living at home, devotedly supporting his widowed mother until her death in 1977. By that time Godwin was already involved with a Buddhist lay group who were studying the Dhamma and practising meditation, so when in 1979 this group founded a Meditation Centre at Nillambe, at the top of a tea estate some distance outside Kandy, he gave up his work as a Librarian and took up residence in the new Centre.

He subsequently became the Centre's chief meditation teacher. Godwin based his teaching on his own practice and the understanding

he gained of the Dhamma through that. He had no particular teacher himself, but he discussed the Buddha's teachings widely with many experienced monks, scholars, and other meditators.

News soon spread about Godwin and the new Centre, passed on by word of mouth by those who had been there and benefited from their stay. Young Westerners who were seeking a spiritual dimension to their lives were attracted to the Centre, appreciating Godwin's ability to translate the Dhamma into a language relevant to people's everyday lives and concerns.

Godwin's reputation as a meditation teacher grew steadily throughout the 80's both in Sri Lanka and abroad. By the mid-80's Godwin had already been invited to teach in Europe and South Africa, and he became over time an internationally acclaimed and much loved teacher.

In the 1990's his teaching tours extended to many more countries, including England, Germany, and Switzerland; and other Asian countries such as India, Singapore, and Hong Kong. Fortunately many of the talks and retreats he gave on these tours were recorded, and it is transcriptions of these recordings that form the basis of Godwin's website ([www.godwin-homc-page.net](http://www.godwin-homc-page.net)) and recent book publications.

At the end of 1999 he made another teaching trip to South Africa and Botswana, and it was shortly after his return to Sri Lanka that he passed away on 22<sup>nd</sup> march 2000 in Peradeniya Hospital of a progressive liver disease. He was 67 years old.

# 1

## LIVING WITH AWARENESS

### AWARENESS AND EFFORT

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

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

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

Catching our intention has very important implications, so that we will not rush into things, especially in everyday life. Before we speak, if we can observe whatever we are going to say. I think we will not hurt others and we will not be using our speech in an unwholesome or unskillful way.

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

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

### **PRESENT MOMENT AWARENESS**

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

And it is also important when awareness is not there, just to know: now I'm not in the present but I'm thinking about what has happened or what is going to happen. Normally these things happen unconsciously, without our knowledge, and then in this process we don't realise how they can create suffering for us, how they can create certain emotions in our minds. So with this

type of practice we can develop mastery over our mind. Usually thoughts control us, but with this type of practice we will be able to develop mastery over our minds.

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

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

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

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

And then we learn to develop self-confidence, because we learn that with awareness and with our own effort we can do a great deal about ourselves. We develop self-confidence and self-reliance. Then we take responsibility for our own actions. We take responsibility for what is happening to us without blaming others and without blaming the surroundings. You take full responsibility for your own actions, for your own thoughts, for

your own ways. This is an aspect that the Buddha emphasised very much.

### **BALANCED EFFORT**

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

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

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

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

### **CULTURAL FACTORS IN RIGHT EFFORT**

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

at least some of them. I'm curious to know which category you fall into in Hong Kong.

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

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

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

## AWARENESS WHILE EATING

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

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

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

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

we really taste our food? I would like you to experiment and discover for yourself at what point you really start tasting the food.

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

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

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

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

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

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

We can also see working meditation as an act of loving-kindness. We can develop so many qualities while working. It's about giving and it's about being generous. You learn patience in working with others. And if you can see work as not something different from meditation, then it is a very useful way of integrating meditation with daily life.

### **INDIVIDUAL AND OUTDOOR MEDITATION**

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

We have become so dependent on external things for our joy and happiness. I call them toys. Though we are grown up we have our toys, and without these toys we are completely lost. Sometimes our whole life is just changing one toy for another,

like children, thinking that maybe this toy will give us pleasure and then finding that it doesn't give us pleasure at all, so that our whole life is spent changing one toy for another. I would like to suggest that meditation is learning to be your own toy, so that you can find yourself interesting and amusing. We can enjoy the dramas that go on in our own minds. We don't have to watch a television, we can amuse ourselves watching the television show in our own minds in this way. We have so many channels!

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

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

**MEDITATOR:** *We have joy.*

**GODWIN:** That's it exactly. In fact in the Buddhist texts there are many references to seeing something beautiful. On one occasion the Buddha was walking with Ananda, his attendant, and at some point he said: look back and see what beautiful scenery we are passing through! There is a section in the *Pāli* texts where it describes how monks and nuns became enlightened. Most of these monks and nuns were living in forests, and in that section some of them describe how the beauty of nature was very inspiring. And sometimes, as we are living in towns or cities, where we don't see nature very often, we are losing this sensitivity for appreciating something beautiful, for learning to relate to nature in this way.

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

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Any questions about what has been said so far?

**MEDITATOR:** *When you said we will practise working with our thoughts, does that mean having no thoughts?*

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

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

## AWARENESS IN DAILY LIVING

**GODWIN:** Today I will talk about the benefits and advantages we gather from our meditation practice and in what way it will help us in everyday life.

One thing is that we are so used to doing things, manipulating things, controlling things. So this strong conditioning comes up when we are meditating where, even in relation to our breathing, we do not allow the body to breathe naturally, we try to control it, we try to breathe differently and so on. Even in walking meditation sometimes this conditioning can come up. So what we are trying to do, which is not very easy, is just being, learning non-doing in relation to meditation. This is one of the things we are trying to do.

Another is that when we are meditating we like some experiences, we dislike other experiences. We like the pleasant experiences to continue and we like the unpleasant experiences to stop. So our meditation becomes a big battle. Wanting things, not wanting things, accepting things, rejecting things. So what we try to do is to learn to have a completely open mind to whatever arises. When we have pleasant states of mind, we just know that there are pleasant states of mind. We learn not to hold

on to them. If it is there, it is there. If it goes away, we allow it to go away. And if some unpleasant experiences arise, here again it is a very strong conditioning we have to hate them, to dislike them, to get rid of them. So in our practice we are learning to be open to pleasant experiences, and to be open to unpleasant experiences, and learning, which is not very easy, actually to see no difference between these two states of mind by just knowing, by just being aware.

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

This is a very important tool, a very important skill to develop because then whatever is happening externally, we learn to look

inside ourselves and to work with what is happening inside us in relation to what is happening outside. What we normally try to do in everyday life is to modify, to change, to try to control what is happening externally to suit us, but as we all know we are unable to do this because we have so little control over external events.

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

It is interesting that in certain cultures what is happening externally can be more unpredictable, because unexpected things often happen. Maybe here it's not so bad because you get the impression that everything is under control, and to a great extent you can predict what will happen. But in a country like Sri Lanka it is entirely different. You never know what's going to happen! Always the unexpected can happen. I will give just one or two examples.

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

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

According to the Buddha's teaching, real security comes when we can be open to insecurity. When we are open to insecurity, then whatever happens, to a great extent you'll not be surprised and then you can see that as an object of meditation, you can make an effort to learn from that. So in a way what we are doing is a kind of preparation for that. Internally we are allowing

anything to arise, any unexpected things to arise, such as an emotion, a sensation, or a thought. So whatever arises we learn to see them, as the Buddha said, just as they are.

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

### **BEGINNER'S MIND**

Another aspect of what we try to do is to have no model, no prior idea or expectation of what should happen or what should not happen. It is interesting that if we have such an idea, a

model, an image in everyday life, and if what happens does not correspond to that model, then suffering arises. And this is exactly how suffering is created when we are meditating.

If we meditate with an idea, a model of what should happen and what should not happen, and if the experience does not correspond with this idea, this model, this can also create suffering. It's not only that, but we might even start hating ourselves because we cannot achieve what we think we should achieve. I know some persons who have given up meditation because they tell me that they cannot succeed in meditation, they say they cannot concentrate when they're meditating or whatever.

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

In a way, we have to have a kind of expectation of what we are going to achieve eventually in meditation, but while practising I would suggest just to forget that, and then whatever happens becomes the practice. The simile I have thought of is like

someone who is climbing a mountain. The idea is, one day, to reach the top of the mountain but if we are so much concerned, pre-occupied with what we are going to see when we reach the top, then we don't see clearly what is happening while climbing.

But in this process of climbing, the adventures we have, the falls we have, the wounds we might sustain, all this we can really learn from, so this can be the practice. We can have some idea of what we will eventually achieve in meditation but I would suggest that what is more important is to learn about, to discover, to explore, to be open to what is happening from moment to moment.

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

So these are some aspects of what we try to do in meditation. The important insights we can develop about impermanence, about change and especially about the most important aspect in the Buddha's teaching, to experience emptiness or no-self, are also related to the way we are practising.

If you can make your own discoveries like this you become very self-reliant, you develop lots of self-confidence. Sometimes there is a nice phrase that is used: you become a spiritual warrior.

There are two types of meditators. One is the person who worries all the time, who is really a spiritual worrier. But in the practice what is encouraged is to be a spiritual warrior, to have trust, to have confidence in yourself, to have courage. So in this practice that we have been trying to do here, we develop these qualities and therefore we are open like a spiritual warrior to any situation, to any experience because we know that we can handle it, we know what to do.

We don't have to push things away, we don't have to deny things, there is no need to refuse to look at things. So with this courage, with this trust, with this confidence, we are prepared, we are being open to whatever arises because we know that whatever arises we can handle it, we can use the Buddha's teachings in any situation.

So now if you want to raise any questions, please feel free to do so.

## TIREDFNESS AND DROWSINESS

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

**GODWIN:** When we are tired I think we all have the experience that it is not easy to practise awareness, we don't have enough energy to practise awareness. So when we feel tired and when we don't have energy, we might try to use some techniques to try to develop some energy.

We will take a practical example which you can relate to, because here in Hong Kong I know that you have to work from morning to late in the evening. And here I have seen people working and they are really working hard throughout the day.

After working so hard, when you go home you are really tired. Now an interesting question arises: when you go back home, how can you practise awareness? Here again, if you are really interested in the practice what you can do is maybe to take a shower and then try to recover to some extent from this feeling of tiredness.

And after taking a shower, if you can do some of the yoga exercises then at least this type of thing might help you to recover from this feeling of tiredness. And maybe do a simple

meditation. I think that to have the motivation to sit may be asking too much, so this is why I have been encouraging you to use reflection. It is an interesting exercise just to reflect on how you spent the day. This can be a very useful kind of meditation, a useful kind of reflection to do each day, even for 10 or 15 minutes.

Anything else?

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

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

**GODWIN:** I will try to briefly touch on both aspects: when the mind is tired and when the body is tired. So first let us take the

situation where you feel that your body is very tired. Now here is something very interesting which we can learn from because sometimes, I wouldn't say every time, sometimes the feeling of physical tiredness can have a psychological reason.

Supposing, to give an example, you have not slept the previous night. So now what happens is you think: last night I did not sleep well. So you are assuming: now I should be feeling tired. It is really not the body that is feeling tired but the thought which says you did not sleep well, and that thought can really affect you in this way. Sometimes it is interesting to use awareness to find out: now do I really feel tiredness in the body or do I feel some tiredness in the mind? Or are you projecting what is happening in your mind to the body and assuming that the body is also tired?

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

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

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

When I say this, I would like to mention a very good friend of mine in Kandy. He's one of the leading lawyers in Kandy. Now he is a very committed and serious meditator. In his house there are two meditation classes every week. This man has a family and lots of responsibilities, but he gets up at 3:30 in the morning for his practice.

You can imagine how in a court of law he has to argue cases, he has to use his brain, he has to use his mind to win his lawsuits, so he can be in very intense situations. He says one of the benefits of meditation is that he can do this very sharply, very clearly. In the past he would get tired, but now with meditation, because he is relaxed, he is also calm and clear, he gets less tired or he doesn't get tired at all. And because of the changes that his colleagues saw in him a few more lawyers have now taken to meditation.

Anything else?

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

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

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

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

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

So whatever the reasons are, one thing that can be attempted is to change the posture. If you are sitting, you can do some walking meditation, or you try to walk backwards. The idea is to induce more energy using walking meditation.

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

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

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

[Chanting]

## AWARENESS AND EMOTIONS

**GODWIN:** I would like to say something about awareness of breathing and also something about working with emotions.

Awareness of the breath is a very simple technique - but somehow we manage to complicate it in many ways. And sometimes I think one problem might be with the word

"concentration". In Chinese, the word "concentration", what does it mean, what is the picture that comes to your mind when the word "concentration" is used?

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

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

But when we practise this technique, we think that we should not have thoughts, that we should not have other sensations, that we should not hear sounds, so we try to exclude them and only

be with the breath, and that can create lots of tension and lots of suffering.

I would suggest instead that we do it in this way: just knowing, just having awareness of what is happening and then allowing calm to come naturally. You can never get it by force, you can never get it by trying. This is maybe why in the texts it is said that when there is loving-kindness the mind becomes calm naturally. So rather than hating things, rather than fighting things, resisting things, controlling things, you just know what is happening, then let calm arise naturally.

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

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

### **THE MIRROR-LIKE MIND**

This is related to a meditation technique which can be described as having a mirror-like mind, where we learn to reflect things just as they are. When something that is considered beautiful comes before a mirror, it reflects that beautiful object just as it is. When something that is considered ugly comes before the mirror, again the mirror reflects it just as it is.

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

You don't have to have a particular posture, you don't have to close your eyes. You are merely aware of what is happening in

your mind and body. Then in such situations in everyday life, if you are reacting, if you are having emotions, physical pain or mental pain you realise it and you see it just as it is, no minus. And in everyday life we can also have pleasant experiences and when we have pleasant experiences, positive experiences, just know it with awareness and reflect it just as it is.

## **WORKING WITH EMOTIONS**

Now I will speak about working with emotions, both unpleasant emotions and pleasant emotions. But what is most important is to learn to work with unpleasant emotions because this is what creates our suffering and this is what we have to work with in everyday life. I think we are all familiar with unpleasant emotions. There is no one who has not experienced them, including myself.

It might be helpful to discover, to reflect and find out which unpleasant emotion really affects you most or bothers you most. It might be helpful sometimes to work with a particular emotion or those emotions that trouble you in everyday life. I will therefore present some tools for working with emotions.

One thing I have been emphasising is that when unpleasant emotions arise to learn to be friendly to them. By hating them, by disliking them, we give them more power. And in hating and

disliking them we might also be pushing them away, repressing them, which is also not good because they can come up in the most unexpected situations. So here again is the importance of awareness, just to know them, just to feel them with awareness.

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

If you hate your unpleasant emotions and if you want to get rid of them, how can you learn about them? But if you are prepared to learn about them and if you are open to them you can wait until they arise. What do you think will happen when you really wait for them to arise?

**MEDITATOR:** *They might not come.*

**GODWIN:** Exactly. So this is a very important realisation which you might come to experience.

So when you fear them and you don't want them to come then they come. And if you are prepared for them, invite them, are

open to them, they don't come. So I hope you will really experience that.

What we are trying to do is to develop insight, to develop skills, not to have only pleasant and calm experiences. So these are the insights I have in mind, because when you are here, if you develop these insights, if you develop these tools, then when unpleasant emotions arise in everyday life you will know how to deal with them.

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

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

So we are not only working with unpleasant emotions; we are also trying, with awareness, to find out when they are absent. This is another very important tool, a very important insight, because we have given these unpleasant emotions such power, such energy, that when they are absent we hardly know that they are absent.

So please make a special effort just to check during the day, what is my state of mind? Am I having unpleasant emotions or am I having pleasant emotions? And then what is very important is that when there are unpleasant emotions don't give them a minus. And when pleasant emotions are there, don't give a plus and hold on to them. Without a plus, without a minus, learning to see them just as they are.

### **THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS**

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

So in talking about the Four Noble Truths sometimes I like to use the medical model: sickness, cause of the sickness, cure and

the medicine. Meditation can be seen as discovering the medicine for the sickness that we create ourselves. So to use it in a practical way, when you are meditating or whatever you are doing, whenever there is suffering don't give it a minus, don't feel bad about it but see: I am experiencing what the Buddha called the First Noble Truth.

He called it noble because it is only when we suffer that we can find a way out of suffering. It is only when we are sick that we feel the need to find the medicine. So in any situation where there is suffering just see it as the First Noble Truth. And I think this is a very interesting way of relating to suffering because we are learning to see the Dhamma in the suffering.

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

out immediately what you are expecting, what you are wanting, what you are demanding.

And I would like to suggest that this is a positive way of using the Four Noble Truths, especially the last two. If you constantly observe what is happening then you will realise: at this moment there is no suffering, there is no reaction, there is nothing that I am resisting. Then it would also be interesting to find out, why there is no suffering now. Then you will realise: ah, I am accepting things just as they are now and there is no suffering.

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

### OPENING TO SUFFERING

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

**GODWIN:** The question is very nicely put. Why do we find it difficult to bear suffering? Why aren't we more open to suffering? A simple response is that we are always surprised,

because we are still not enlightened, and naturally as we are not enlightened we are bound to suffer. We should be surprised if there was no suffering!

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

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

The second point is: when we are being open to suffering, waiting for it to arise, then we are not surprised by it. And when suffering does arise see if you can say: very interesting; I'm very grateful because now that it has come I can work with it. Please try this tool and see what a difference it makes when suffering comes. To put it in another way, now we see it as something extremely negative, but in the way that I am suggesting it is

something very positive. And if you can, at that moment ask yourself the question: what can I learn from this suffering? In what way can I use the Buddha's tools? In what way can I use the Buddha's medicine in working with this situation?

So if you can develop this positive attitude you will be really open to suffering. And then you can really make use of suffering to find a way out of suffering. So it is simply changing your attitude towards suffering, and when you change your attitude you see suffering in an entirely different way.

### ANICCA AND ANATTĀ

In discovering the medicine and using the medicine there are two powerful aspects of the Buddha's teaching, which are the fact of change or impermanence, and the fact of no-self. So we need, as far as possible, to try to work with these two very important aspects of the Buddha's teaching.

We need to be open to any change that may arise physically and mentally and even externally. If we insist that change should only take place according to our own idea, then when there is change which does not correspond to that idea it leads to suffering. But by realising that this is the nature of existence, that it changes and that we have little control over change, then

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

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

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

Now what happens is because of this sense of self, we have images, models, of how things should be according to my *way*. It is always *my way*. Naturally in everyday life things don't always happen according to *my way*. That is how suffering is created in everyday life, with this idea of *my way*. So whenever

you are suffering in everyday life, you can try to find out: what has been my idea, what has been my view of how things should be? Then you'll realise how this sense of self is directly related to the suffering that you are experiencing. So in this simple, practical way you can work with this idea of *my way* and then when that *my way* is not there, when there is emptiness, notice how there is an absence of suffering.

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

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

How does this feeling of *Somebody* generate anxiety about the future? So with this feeling of *Somebody*, you feel that in the future everything should go according to the idea this *Somebody*

has. And if you are uncertain about that, then this is how anxieties arise.

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

### **GUIDED MEDITATION**

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

We can hear some drops of water.

The chanting of the insects.

Sound of the wind.

Experiencing the present moment with the help of the sounds.

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

Let us see ourselves as our best friend. Try to really feel it, feel it in every part of your body, your whole being.

And being your best friend, can you have trust and confidence in yourself?

Learning to open our heart to ourselves.

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

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

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

Feeling grateful for this moment.

Can we feel as one family of spiritual friends?

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

Now let us bow to each other.

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

## 2

### **WATCHING THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS**

#### **GUIDED MEDITATION**

You can sit in a comfortable position, because the posture is not really important. What is important is to have your spine erect but relaxed. You may have your eyes opened or closed.

Now just allow the mind to do whatever it likes. If thoughts are arising, let thoughts arise-thoughts about the past, Thoughts about the future....

There is no need to repress thoughts, no need to control thoughts. See how far you can be aware of each thought that arises. You need to have moment-to-moment awareness.

Just know how you relate to each thought that arises. Are you judging them? Are you getting involved with them? Or can you allow them to just arise and pass away? You have enough space in your mind for every thought to arise. See how far you relate to each thought that arises. Learning to make friends with your thoughts....

Make your own discoveries. Are the thoughts mostly about the past? Are they mostly about the future? Are the thoughts racing one after another? Are they slowing down? Is there a space between two thoughts? Do you get involved in some thoughts? Do you judge your thoughts? Make your own discoveries about the different aspects, about the different dimensions, about the structure of your thoughts.

Have moment-to-moment awareness of the way you are relating to each thought that arises.

Now can you do the same in relation to emotions? Can you allow emotions to arise? Especially the emotions that we don't like, that we resist, deny, repress and control?

Emotions like sadness, fear, anxiety, and guilt. Can you just allow such emotions to arise if they need to arise? Can you make friends with them? Can you make enough space for them? Can you just allow them to come? Letting them be without repressing them, without controlling them, without resisting them?

Thought and emotions: learning to see them as they are, not as they should be or ought to be. Learning just to allow them to be. Just letting them be....

Can you make friends with the emotions that you don't like, that you resist, that you control? Can you create space for them?

Can you do the same in relation to sensations in your body? Tension, pressure, unpleasant sensations. Can you allow any sensation to arise in your body and just let it be? Just allowing it to be?

Thoughts, emotions, sensations, sounds. Learning to see them as they are. Learning to have a mirror-like mind, just reflecting things as they are. Not resisting anything, not grasping anything. Not liking anything, not disliking anything. Not accepting anything, not

rejecting anything. Just being, just allowing. Surrendering to what is....

Be alert and awake from moment to moment....

Thank you. You may open your eyes now.

## **DISCUSSION**

**GODWIN:** We will begin our discussion with thoughts. Let me hear your experiences in relation to thoughts.

**MEDITATOR:** *I'm used to the practice of focussing on the breath in order to stop thoughts, rather than letting thoughts arise freely.*

**GODWIN:** This brings up a very important point. We need to learn to focus on an object such as breathing; but we also need to learn to allow the mind to do what it likes. That is, we need both focussing and scanning. Otherwise, if you are only used to focussing, then you can't do anything else. So ideally we should learn to do both, focussing and scanning.

**MEDITATOR:** *I find that when I allow the thoughts to arise, no thought arises.*

**GODWIN:** That is fascinating! So I'd like to discuss the implications of it. When we are focussing on the breathing and

we don't want thoughts to arise, what happens? They arise. When we are allowing thoughts to arise, they do not arise! Now why should this be? Why is the mind always acting in opposition to us? How is it that when we allow things to happen in the mind or when we invite things to happen, they're not forthcoming; but when we don't want things to happen, they seem to arise?

This happens not only with thoughts but also with emotions, especially emotions that we do not like. When you invite emotions to arise, they do not seem to arise. They seem to be rather shy. But when we fight them, when we fear them, when we do not want them to arise, they seem to arise. Now what is the reason for this?

This brings up an important point which I often repeat and emphasize? Meditation consists in making an effort to understand how our mind works by making friends with it, by being gentle with it, by telling the mind to do this or that as we would tell a child. If you tell a child not do something, what does the child do? It is the same principle. And then, what do the parents say? "My child is stubborn." We use the same word in relation to our mind: "I can never meditate successfully. My mind is stubborn."

So it is extremely important in the first place to have this right relationship with our mind and body, to make friends with our mind and body, to create space for them; and then to make an effort to understand how our mind works. It is extremely unfortunate if we are so involved with techniques and achieving particular states of mind that we miss this wonderful opportunity to understand our mind. So this is why I say meditation is understanding, exploring, discovering. Then there's an element of fun in it. Then you find meditation interesting. All the time we can make discoveries about what is happening in our mind. But if we are concerned only about a particular state of mind, we miss this important point.

**MEDITATOR:** *There seems to be a natural tendency to repel our negative thoughts, but you are encouraging us to be friendly with our negative thoughts. That goes against our conditioning.*

**GODWIN:** It's a very strong conditioning that we have to judge our thoughts: negative thoughts, positive thoughts, good thought, bad thoughts, beautiful thoughts, ugly thoughts, important thoughts, unimportant thoughts. After all, they are only thoughts. But with our past, with our past conditioning, we tend to judge them. And then what happens when we start judging them? We repress them. "Negative thoughts should not

arise,” so we push them away. “Ugly thoughts should not arise,” so we start repressing. This is how we start to repress, to control, to deny. So it is extremely important in this technique to learn to relate to thoughts just as thoughts, without these value judgements. Then you will not be repressing them, denying them. And when you start relating to thoughts without judging them, you just let them go. It is by judging them that we get involved in them.

Our thoughts really grip us, and that’s how suffering is created. There is a beautiful metaphor that is used in Tibetan Buddhism, in the Mahamudra practice. Relate your mind as a clear spacious sky and to the thoughts as clouds. The clouds do not affect the sky and the sky doesn’t affect the clouds. Or take the metaphor of a mirror, which is used in many meditation traditions. It is there is the Zen tradition, in the Tibetan tradition, in the Theravada tradition, in Taoism. Whatever object comes before the mirror does not affect the mirror, and the mirror doesn’t affect the object. So relate to thoughts that way; and you can do that only if you can learn not to judge them.

So please avoid the confused idea that meditation is about trying to stop thoughts. If you can relate to thoughts in the way I am describing, then whether thoughts are there or not, the mind

remains like a clear mirror or like the clear spacious sky. And that is a mind that is free.

Another point is that when you learn to do this you don't have to confine it to the sitting posture. As we all know, thoughts are arising and passing away all the time. From the time we wake up to the time we go off to sleep, it is continuous, relentless-thoughts, the inner chatter. So if you can learn to work with thoughts in this way, then meditation becomes a way of life.

**MEDITATOR:** *How does this practice of watching thoughts differ from daydreaming?*

**GODWIN:** Interesting question! We know how thoughts generate stories and daydreams and fantasies. I would like to illustrate this with an example. There was a meditator at the Centre in Sri Lanka, a Western woman, and a mosquito bit her. So she thought, "I'll get malaria." And then she thought, "If I get malaria, I'll have to go to the hospital. And if I go to the hospital, I won't be able to leave Sri Lanka on the day I'm planning to leave. In which case I'll have to inform Mother. And when Mother learns that I won't be arriving on the day she is expecting me, she's bound to get dispersed...."

Now I see that you are amused. But isn't that what we all do-creating stories from what has happened in the past and from

what we anticipate in the future? But we don't realise that we create stories, we become victims of the stories that we create ourselves. And this is how suffering is created. Sometimes I use the metaphor of films. We create our own films. We produce them, direct them, and act in them. We do all that. And these films that we create ourselves again generate suffering and the emotions that arise in relation to it.

Some meditator's daydreams are terrible. One young meditator told me that in all her daydreams she becomes the victim. Fascinating! But then there was another meditator who said that in his daydreams he was always victorious, successful. So it seems there are differences. Now this is meditation: to understand the contents of all this, exploring whatever happens in our minds.

It's very significant that the term used is "day-dream." What is the difference between a day-dream and a night-dream?

**MEDITATOR:** *Not much. They're both involuntary.*

**GODWIN:** Very good. In other words, we hardly have any control. In both situations we hardly have any control; they become real. And this we call living! During the day, perhaps most of the time, we are lost in stories, daydreaming,

fantasising. And that situation—that is how suffering is created, that is how emotions arise.

Hence the importance of our meditation. Hence the importance of being alert and awake. It is very significant that in techniques like focussing on breathing there is no room for stories to arise. When thoughts do arise, ideally we learn to let go of them and come back to the present. Because, as I said, our stories are about what happened in the past and what is going to happen in the future. So in focussing on breathing, we learn to be in the here-and-now, so that there is no room for daydreaming or fantasies to arise.

Anything else about thoughts? It's a very interesting area, a very important area. I'd like to raise a question for you to reflect on: can there be suffering without a thought? It's an important question to reflect on. Can there be suffering without a thought? Find out for yourself.

Now I'd like to hear your experiences in relation to emotions. When we practise letting emotions arise, especially emotions that we don't like, what happens?

It's extremely important this working with emotions, especially unpleasant emotions. In meditation one needs to realise in one's

own experience that trying to repress emotions, trying to get rid of emotions, actually gives them more power, more energy. This is a very important realisation. One has to see this in one's own experience. But when we allow emotions to arise, when we invite them, then either they don't arise or when they do arise they are not powerful, they don't overwhelm us.

There's a word one meditator used to describe unpleasant emotions and I have been continuing to use it though I am not very happy with it. The word is "monsters." So you invite all the monsters you dislike to your party, and guess what happens? They don't come! But if we are afraid of them, if they come when we are trying to get rid of them, then small monsters become bigger. This is again a very important experience in meditation, to realise how we create our own suffering by making our monsters bigger.

So I have my own definition of meditation. Meditation is an attempt to create space in our minds so that our monsters can become our friends. And when they have become our friends it makes no difference whether they are there or not. And that is a very important breakthrough: the pleasant/unpleasant dichotomy disappears.

Now what happens in meditation if we identify only with pleasant experiences and dislike unpleasant experiences? We like only angels not monsters. So here is a split in us, a dichotomy, and a duality. So what has happened is that in the name of meditation we have become divided; our meditation has become a battle of resisting the monsters and going for the angels. One has to transcend this dichotomy; one has to go beyond this pleasant/unpleasant division. And this technique of watching emotions enables one to do that. It is an important breakthrough. You learn to have a mirror-like mind that reflects things as they are. And that is a mind that is free.

**MEDITATOR:** *When I invite unpleasant emotions to arise, they don't arise.*

**GODWIN:** So is there a problem? In fact some people tell me they want monsters to arise, and when they don't arise, it's a problem! See what a lot of energy we have given to them. What is presented in the Dhamma is very simple: when they are there, just know that they are there; when they are not there, just know that they are not there. In both situations just have a mirror-like mind. That is freedom.

**MEDITATOR:** *When I invite them in the meditation they don't come, but in certain situations in everyday life they come up and are a problem.*

**GODWIN:** A very important practical question, because in everyday life there are situations where these emotions may arise-anger, fear, depression, guilt, tension, jealousy and so on. I think we all are familiar with these. And we also know from practical experience how they just come up in unexpected situations.

Now how does a meditator work with such situations? We have a very strong conditioning, maybe from childhood, to dislike them, to repress them, to control them, especially the unpleasant experiences. Take anger. When we were small our parents didn't like us when we got angry. A girl once told me that when she was small her mother would say "Don't get angry. Your beautiful face becomes ugly." And you will have heard similar things. So what happens? As children we learn to repress anger. We learn to pretend, to repress, to control. This is a very strong conditioning we have.

And then what happens when you take to the spiritual life, when you take up meditation? We are told the same thing: "meditators don't get angry. They have only positive experiences."

It is extremely important to change this perspective. And how does one change it? By realising that we should first learn about these emotions. We have already taken up a position about them-that they are bad, undesirable-without even learning about them, without even experiencing them. This is why it is so clearly said in the Dhamma: when they are there, just be aware that they are there. We don't really experience these emotions fully and completely because of the positions we have taken. So if we have these emotions in everyday life-fear, anger, whatever-we can learn to be completely aware of them, completely with those emotions. This is the first point.

The second point is to learn to experiment with them, to explore them. Experimenting with them means not taking up a position. Consider anger: suppose that in everyday life you get angry. How does the meditator work with the anger? Why do we get angry? Because we have an expectation, a model or an ideal, of how the other person should behave, or how we should behave, or how life should be.

When we realise this, that the problem is with ourselves in having such an idea, having such a concept, then we learn to look at ourselves. And we learn to take responsibility for the anger. Otherwise we take up the position that the other person has

provoked us, so we don't have to do anything about it, we can continue to get angry and not realise the reason for it by experimenting and exploring. Such a person will never get an opportunity to work with such states of mind. So one should look at *oneself*. This is the second point.

So rather than focussing your attention on the subject that is provoking you, you look at yourself and try to explore, to understand the nature of anger. And then at that moment you will realise: it's *my* problem for having this idea, this model or image.

Then there is another aspect to anger. Some very interesting physiological changes take place in anger. And here again one has to make an effort to experience it, to understand it. This is what I meant by experimenting. Now what happens in our body when we get angry? What happens to our face, our heartbeat, our stomach? One has to be aware of these changes that are taking place in this body.

Different people may have different signals physically, but there is one that happens to everyone when they got angry, the breath speeds up. What happens with the breath when we meditate and the mind becomes calm? It slows down. So this shows that the breath is a very important indicator, a very useful monitor of

what is happening in our mind. May be that's why focussing on breathing is a meditation technique. Doing this with anger, you will be relating to it in an entirely different way.

This can be done in relation to every emotion in everyday life. One can change one's attitude towards them rather than repressing them, controlling them, denying them. Rather than pretending that we're not angry and so on, we make friends with them by creating space for them and learning about them.

And there's yet another aspect to it. When we have these emotions, we tend to own them. We tend to think of it as *my* anger, *my* depression, *my* anxiety. Now, is it possible to relate to them without this sense of ownership? Can we see just anger, just guilt, just fear? With this change of attitude towards emotions they become learning experiences, valuable experiences for us. We can be learning about these emotions all the time, waiting for opportunities to arise to learn about them. Then your spiritual practice takes on an entirely different dimension. So rather than being afraid of them, rather than chastising yourself for having them, you relate to them in an entirely different way.

And then you realise when they are not there. When they are there you learn to work with them, to explore them, understand

them; and when they are not there you realise that they are not there. So what is the difference? What is the result?

**MEDITATOR:** *You are living just in the present.*

**GODWIN:** Well, living in the present is just an ideal. But here again, this phrase “living in the present” has various aspects. Of course you are right, if one can be completely in the present, in the here-and-now, one can be free to a great extent of what is happening. But there’s another way of understanding what one means by being in the present. It means that in actual fact, although we assume that there is a past and a future, in a sense there is only the present. Here is only the here-and-now. Even when we recall things, and when we anticipate things, we do it now. So when we realise that the only reality is the present, then we’ll be relating to the past and the future in an entirely different way.

So again, to put it in the practical terms, when you realise that a story you are constructing is dependent on something that has happened or something you are anticipating, then the story loses its power.

**MEDITATOR:** *But expressing our emotions can bring problems.*

**GODWIN:** Generally there are two ways to relate to emotions. Either we repress and control them or we express and indulge them. As we have found out, repressing and controlling them has its problems; and expressing and indulging them has its problems too, as we know. But what is attempted in meditation is, ideally, neither to repress nor to express, but just to be aware of it, just to create space for it, not to make friends with it, to experiment.

**MEDITATOR:** *Does this practice eventually bring about a transformation in the mind-enlightenment?*

**GODWIN:** This again brings up an interesting point, that we should not be concerned about results. In meditation, the spiritual life, we can become so involved in goals. Is there a difference between being ambitious materially and having ambitions spiritually? Is there really a difference? The ambition is the same. The more you try to get rid of an emotion, the more power you give it. So we should find the work we do with emotions more interesting than the state of being rid of the emotions.

In some cultures there is such an emphasis on achieving, on results. You want results, immediate results; but then you miss the fun. What is important is not the end result, but the doing of

it. What is important is not what will happen when you reach the top of the hill, but rather the process of climbing it, the adventures involved in it. So in some traditions they say the ordinary mind is the enlightened mind. The practice is enlightenment.

Often we are doing something in order to overcome things, to see a result from it. But if we can change our perspective and learn to see what we are doing as something interesting in itself, something enjoyable, then that is enough. That is enlightenment, that is freedom. So I'd like to emphasise this point: see importance in your practice itself, not in what will come out of the practice. I don't see any difference between material ambition and spiritual ambition. Both can generate suffering, both create tension and repression. But if you can relate to the practice itself in this different way, then your mind is free at the time you are practising, not when your practice is over.

Finally, I'd like to touch on some other aspects of this technique. It can have subtler levels. One is that you may have a glimpse while you are doing this that there is only thinking, that there is no thinker apart from thought. Normally when we have thoughts we assume that *I* am thinking, that these are *my* thoughts. But working with this technique of observing the

thoughts, you may have a glimpse or insight that there is only thinking and that the thinker apart from the thoughts is something we constructed. You may have a similar experience in relation to sensations and emotions: that there is no feeler apart from feeling. The idea of *my* thought, *my* pain, *my* anger, *my* fear drops away and that is a very important realisation.

Another aspect of this technique is that when we learn to observe whatever happens without judging, when we learn not to repress things, not to control things, then, in psychological terms, this will help make our unconscious conscious. In techniques like focussing on an object, what happens is that there is an element of suppression. When thoughts come, you learn to let go of them and come back to the object, so there is an element of control, of exclusion. But in this technique of watching there is no control, no exclusion, no denial.

So in this process when you learn to allow things to happen, then whatever you have repressed can surface. And when your unconscious is made conscious in this way, your behaviour becomes integral and harmonious.

Another way of looking at this technique is that we are learning to surrender-to surrender to whatever is happening.