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and happiness whenever we face any unfavourable external conditions.

I quite often share with others my experience in maintaining peace and happiness within my mind, even in the face of difficult external conditions. Even though we cannot prevent or overcome all the unfavourable external conditions, we can through our practice protect our inner peace and happiness from being harmed or affected.

I know of one Indian woman who used to come to teachings, and sometimes after teachings we'd go out for tea. On one such occasion she asked me, 'Geshe-la, what is your secret of living a happy and peaceful life?'. I began to talk to her a bit about my life story, how I lost my country and had to leave my family behind etc., and then suddenly she said, 'I know, the answer is you have no attachment'. I thought that was a very smart answer, clearly exemplifying the genius of the Indian brain.

Another emphasis that I have always been putting into my talks on meditation is to apply the meditation to maintain peace and happiness within our mind. This is extremely important. To maintain and effectively protect our inner peace and happiness we need to apply a meditation practice. A meditation practice is very important in order for us to enjoy sustainable peace and happiness, and to inwardly have some sort of resistance so that we are not always vulnerable to the continuous changing conditions and circumstances of life.

However, when we let our ability to maintain our inner peace and control our mind slide, then how easily those difficult external causes and conditions can overwhelm us. It is so easy to be influenced by external causes; we can completely lose ourselves. We can easily get completely depressed. Some external situations result in us losing our interest and motivation, so much so that we cannot enjoy our life. We might find it difficult to even go to sleep or go out to eat; sometimes nothing helps. When we are very disturbed and agitated, we can clearly see how in that situation all external things fail to help us overcome these problems. So here we can see that the only thing that truly benefits us is learning meditation practice and integrating it into our life and getting used to it.

We are going to do our usual breathing meditation practice. In this meditation we don't need a lot of knowledge or to have to think about the topic or the reason for the topic. The meditation is simply just to direct our mind onto the object, on our breath. And of course, in order to do that, first of all we need to get rid of all our thoughts, like the very disturbing thoughts that have filled our mind. But the reality is that sometimes it is not always easy to get rid of all these disturbing thoughts. So we need to understand how those thoughts arise, and then how these different thoughts have an effect on our emotions, whether they are pleasant or unpleasant.

Generally speaking, in our case, lots of these thoughts are all related to our mind or consciousness, and its contact, mainly with the five sense objects, such as visual form, sound, smell, taste and touch. We experience the contact of our subjective mind and its object. For example, if you take the subjective mind or subjective consciousness as our visual eyesight or eye consciousness which perceives a form. When it has contact with an attractive form, desire arises, and contact with unpleasant form leads to aversion arising. So, depending on our mental contact with and perception of various external sense objects we generate various emotions,

which shape our experiences. If we cut the contact of our mind with an object, then we are getting rid of that particular state of mind or thought. So we can see how a meditation practice works in terms of disciplining our mind by fixing it on a specific object, and thereby preventing various disturbing thoughts from arising.

If we observe our state of mind we can see that when it is occupied on a negative object, we experience disturbances within us. So if we want to get rid of a particular state of mind, then one way is to divert our mind to a different object. However if, instead of trying to discipline our mind from going after a negative object, we simply let the mind engage with the negative object, then the result is that the discomfort and internal turmoil will be intensified. So I often say, sometimes it is wise to forget certain things and thoughts that bring us unpleasant experiences. I remember in my case, not so much now but in my young age, I suffered because of not being able to forget certain things and events. I can recall when I was young I found it extremely painful whenever I had to depart from my mother after spending some time with her. I just missed my mother a lot and suffered because I could not take her off my mind. Looking back, one of the main reasons why I found it so hard to leave her was because she loved me and looked after me so well that I was emotionally attached to her. I suffered because I could not emotionally cope well from being separated from her. However, the separation didn't affect me afterwards, as I got on with my life. Even if I thought about my mother, I didn't have difficulties. So in the same way, sometimes in our life, when things are going well and suddenly that changes, then we find it very difficult to cope with.

Some people may say, they don't have such problems, but in fact when they face a really testing situation, they realise that they are internally not strong enough and that they do have a problem.

Whatever we do in life, we need to be clear about our purpose or reason for doing it. When we engage in meditation practice, we have to recognise very clearly its purpose and benefits. So that is why it is good to discuss and think about the benefits of meditation before we begin our meditation.

Now let's begin the breathing meditation. Relax yourself and try to get rid of all the external thoughts so that the mind can rest inwards. Then breathe in and out, trying to direct the focus of the mind on the inhaling and exhaling of the breath.

*(Meditation)*

We continue the meditation by chanting the Buddha's mantra, and as we begin the chanting make sure that you keep the mind inward and try to use the sound of the mantra as the focus for the mind

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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