
Dharmarakshita's "*The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

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We will begin with a short breathing meditation. Please choose the right posture and make sure your body is relaxed. Next, stabilise the mind by removing thoughts of external objects. Having stabilised the mind inward, concentrate on the breath passing in and out through the nostrils. Try to not let anything else interfere with this concentration, so that your mind can focus single-pointedly on your breath.

If we practise meditation regularly, we gain inner peace and a stable mind. If we don't control our mind it will become habitually distracted and will not be able to concentrate on whatever we do.

Regular meditation practice helps us guard our mind. If we watch our mind we can see that, unless we do something to control it, it will occupy itself with thoughts and ideas about objects or people, creating suspicion and other feelings. Such an overcrowded mind feels trapped within many confusions, many delusions. We can see that such a mind cannot think clearly, cannot operate normally. Having so many unnecessary and useless thoughts can even cause damage or sickness within our mind.

A mind that has reached this state is difficult to cure, so it is important to try to eliminate any symptoms of such sickness right from the start. It's just like the bad habit of smoking. Whenever someone with a smoking habit finds a spare moment, they automatically think they have to smoke - it is very hard to control. Similarly, if we observe our mind, we see we have certain ways of looking at things. Creative and positive thoughts produce good feelings. But we also have destructive, unskillful and even paranoid thoughts. If we don't minimise or eliminate negative ways of thinking, when negative thoughts arise again, as with smoking, they become habitual and we find them difficult to overcome. This can cause us great suffering.

Thus it is important to realise we can minimise or subdue unwanted thoughts with meditation techniques or training. It is important to feel positive about your ability to deal with such thoughts. If, on the contrary, you think it impossible to challenge these thoughts, you will let the same thought repeat in your mind, month by month, year by year. As said before, this can cause mental sickness.

Discipline is very important - regardless of whether or not you consider yourself to be a religious practitioner - if you wish to live a happy, satisfying and contented lifestyle. If you are a genuine spiritual practitioner, daily discipline means you allocate each of the 24 hours of the day to doing your spiritual practices. If you stick to that timetable, you would be using your time and your actions to create virtue. Thus, whatever outer material

conditions you face, you would find that your spiritual and meditation practice would give you enough peace and joy in your mind to feel positive about and contented with your life and how you spend your time.

Likewise, even if you are not a devoted spiritual practitioner, you can discipline in your daily life by setting aside time for all the things you must do. By sticking to that timetable, even if what you do is not a meditation practice, it still keeps the mind disciplined. When you are doing something, try to concentrate, thinking that your time is allocated only to that particular task. Not only will this help you do things efficiently, it also prevents your mind from feeling uneasy.

Thus, even someone who does not practise meditation, but who lives a disciplined lifestyle, will have a steady life. Such people are often very satisfied, very positive about their life because they are mentally calm. This in turn supports their physical health. Even people who are not that comparatively well-off can live life happily and joyfully as a result of mental discipline and can be content with what they are doing and how they are living.

We will continue the teaching on the text, *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*. In the last teaching, we said that only those who have overcome the selfish mind know how to transform or utilise mental delusions or adverse situations to achieve enlightenment. To quote the text:

Verse 6:

And thus the Bodhisattvas are likened to peacocks:
They live on delusions—those poisonous plants.
Transforming them into the essence of practice,
They thrive in the jungle of everyday life.
Whatever is presented, they always accept,
While destroying the poison of clinging desire.

We will discuss the meaning of this Verse next week. Geshe Doga welcomes any questions.

First questioner:

Question: When you have thoughts, how do you know which ones are good, which ones are bad and which ones should you be disciplined about?

Answer: It seems obvious to say that all our actions and deeds are decided by our thoughts. To give a simple example - when you have the thought of going to sleep, you physically go to your bedroom and lie in bed. The thought has actually ordered or commanded your body, and the body has no choice but to listen. As you lie in bed, if you physically and mentally relax, you find you can easily go to sleep, and so it is very enjoyable.

But if your mind is not controlled, you may find yourself

thinking about the next day, thinking about going to work - thinking how much you hate your work, hate getting up, or hate seeing the people at work. These thoughts not only stop you from sleeping, but also cause you to suffer while just lying in bed and doing nothing. This is just an example - it is obvious that if you watch your mind when you are trying to sleep, and you have negative thoughts, that it will be difficult for you to go to sleep.

When we go to sleep, not only do we physically need to rest, we also need to mentally withdraw our mind inward, and stop thinking about the past or future. Even if we have set ourselves 6 - 7 hours for sleep, if our thoughts wander outward, it may take 2 - 3 hours to actually get to sleep. Thus you can see how useful a disciplined mind is, even if you are not a spiritual practitioner.

As said before, some people do not practise meditation but are very disciplined about their time. For example, after coming home from work, they have a routine - taking a shower, cooking, eating, and going to bed at a fixed time. Because of this routine, they have a good sleep and are able to get up every morning at the same time, feeling refreshed. with a clear and positive frame of mind to start the day.

Conversely a person who is not disciplined, whose mind is scattered, would have trouble going to sleep and getting up. When they get up, they don't feel mentally and physically sound.

Therefore it is important for us to understand the mind and how it affects our actions in daily life. With this understanding we can go beyond a mundane level of existence to understand more clearly what thoughts and actions are positive and good for our own and others lives and also what is not good.

Just one more question?

Second questioner:

Question: Is Geshe-la saying in the "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons" that Bodhisattvas use desire to get rid of desire?

Answer: This teaching falls within the common teachings of Sutra, (Sutrayana or open teachings), so when it mentions utilising desire as a contributory factor to gain enlightenment rather than being an obstacle, it is not the same concept that you find in the teachings of Mantra, (Mantrayana or the secret teachings). The secret teachings say that a practitioner can use desire to destroy itself. They use the analogy of a certain insect born inside a tree. After it is born, it eats (consumes) the tree from the inside. In this way, delusions are used in spiritual practice (of Mantrayana).

In fact in the Sutra teachings, it is incorrect to talk about taking desire as the path to enlightenment. Rather, the idea is to transform desire as a means to achieve enlightenment. To give an example - Bodhisattvas would never hate an annoying or harmful person. Bodhisattvas do not see such people as a cause of anger,

but as a means of developing tolerance and patience.

The famous Indian Master Atisha had an attendant who was always ill-tempered, but Atisha regarded him as his favourite attendant and always kept the attendant at his side. Others couldn't understand this, so they asked Atisha why he wouldn't replace this attendant. Atisha replied by telling them, "You know nothing about the qualities of this person - he is the strength of my spiritual practice". This is an example of using anger as a means of developing patience.

There are also stories about Bodhisattvas choosing to be born as kings and marrying and having children in order to benefit more people. This is also an example of transforming desire to achieve enlightenment. If you look at the life story of the two brothers Vasabhandu and Asanga, before having them their mother didn't plan to have children. But at some stage she decided to have children and made a strong prayer that by giving birth, she would be of service to many living things. So we can also say that this is a way of utilising delusion as a means to achieving enlightenment.

If we relate the text to our own lives, what it means is that we can take advantage of adverse situations. For example, when our mind is very influenced by anger, if we use that moment to better understand anger, it can provide us with some basis for developing patience.

We will finish here now. As usual we will chant the Buddha's mantra, so sit in the meditation posture and bring the mind inward and, as we chant, focus on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

Transcribed from the tapes by Gaye Radcliffe

Transcription checked by Mark Emerson

Edited by Mary-Lou Considine

Edit checked against the tapes by Mark Emerson

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