
Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

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As usual we will begin by practising a short breathing meditation. Please choose the meditation posture that is most comfortable and try to relax your body.

In general, our discriminating knowledge can tell us what we, as humans, seek in life. As humans we generally wish to be physically happy, enjoying sound health of body with good surrounding conditions, and we also wish to possess a relaxed and happy state of mind. But unfortunately we don't always find both good health of body as well as a peaceful and happy state of mind.

By utilising our discriminating knowledge we can investigate and ask ourselves, 'Why can't we always have both a sound mind and sound body? What obstacle is preventing us enjoying, especially, inner peace and happiness?' It is important to utilise our discriminating knowledge and recognise why we lack mental peace and satisfaction even if we are physically happy.

If we investigate then we will find that it is because our mind is filled with many various distracting thoughts. So with this mind we should think that the meditation we practise is to eradicate all these thoughts which disturb our inner peace and happiness.

Through our investigations we will find that being more responsible will help us to ensure the good physical health of our body. So to some extent, whether or not we enjoy a healthy body is in our own hands. Likewise, we can question whether we also have the control to choose our state of our mind.

If we focus on our mind and try to recognise the causes of the various problems we experience (such as emotional disturbance like dissatisfaction, anxiety, stress etc.) we see that these problems are created within us by our own mind. We create these problems through the process of generating various thoughts, like thinking of one's past, present or future. This process of thinking fills our mind with all sorts of worries which, through closer analysis, we find are all completely unnecessary. These unnecessary thoughts make our mind restless and deprive us of any real sense of relaxation. If you go further now, and try to understand how these unnecessary thoughts come into our mind then we see that they come into our mind because we have neglected to control our mind. So our mind becomes preoccupied with the events of life, and external objects.

In simple terms, the thoughts which unbalance us and which replay unwanted experiences in our lives exist because of the types of objects we hold in our mind. From this point of view, if we ask whether we have the choice of holding these various objects in our mind then we see that at least in theory we do have a choice of getting rid of certain objects and replacing them with better ones.

As we know, we have some control over our physical health in as much as we can make our life healthier. If we choose to exercise it we also have the same ability to shape and nourish our mind.

We practise meditation to get rid of the disturbing thoughts that we generate within. To gain inner peace means that we have achieved a cessation of all rough and gross states of conceptual thoughts. In fact it says that at the moment a beginner experiences inner peace they have removed all the gross states of conceptual thought. So we practise meditation because it is effective in achieving inner peace. Through meditation our mind is prevented from being influenced by and wandering after unnecessary thoughts, by being directed to objects and ways of thinking that enhance peace.

So let us now do a few minutes of breathing meditation. Prevent the mind from generating thoughts of external objects, and thereby allow it to abide within. Then, as the mind abides within, direct it single-pointedly to the breath coming in and going out through the nostrils.

While we meditate, if we ask, 'What is the practice supposed to do?' then the answer is that we meditate to have an impact our mind. By practising meditation you decrease and eliminate the faults that exist in your mind and in your deeds. At the same time we also increase the positive qualities in our mind and in our deeds.

This will then transform the person, and so create a better human being. This is a good thing. If we have a problem that brings harm and turmoil into our lives then we can change that. Through our meditation, we can reach into the mind and change the rigid patterns of thinking that shape our daily attitude and interaction with life. If when we have some difficulty or problem, we simply believe that it is one's second nature and nothing can be done about it, then there is no chance of getting rid of the problem, even if somebody tries to help us. If you want to get rid of the various problems that influence your life then you have to apply a discipline that will affect your mind in such a way as to allow you to change your mental outlook. By affecting this change in our mind we can then view and interact with life in a less problematic way.

In our discussions of the text *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons* last time, we saw that the Bodhisattvas can transform or utilise the poison of this worldly existence as a means to fulfil their goal of benefiting other living beings.

The text uses the analogy comparing Bodhisattvas to peacocks for many reasons. For example, many people find the peacock to be a very attractive bird. When the peacock stretches its wings and feathers it is very beautiful and ornate in its colouring. Likewise it is said that as a person, a Bodhisattva is very inspiring and appealing to the mind of other beings. Here, the

indication is that because the Bodhisattvas always holds love, compassion and care towards others, so the physical presence of the Bodhisattvas is also very appealing to others' minds. The outer appearance of the Bodhisattva is very appealing to other beings because of the expressions and gestures of love and compassion, and the benevolent attitudes that are held and cultivated by the Bodhisattva.

When the peacock is compared with other birds it is a very harmless kind of bird. The peacock lives by eating poisonous plants and seeds so they obtain their livelihood without causing harm to the lives of other beings. In that respect they are also likened to the Bodhisattvas because the Bodhisattvas are free from causing harm to other beings.

The peacock has five feathers on the top of its head. They are likened to Bodhisattvas in that respect because the Bodhisattvas path also has five divisions. So there are many ways in which the peacock illustrates the example of the Bodhisattvas.

Through comparing the peacock (harmless in gaining their livelihood) with the Bodhisattva (not causing harm to others), we are encouraged to follow a practice of developing a good heart, which reflects the Bodhisattva's way of life. As we all presently possess some level of good heart, through studying this teaching we are encouraged to develop it further by minimising our harmful actions to others. Even people who do not have any great interest in spiritual practise have great respect or admiration for anyone who is very kind to others, and who never causes any problem or harm to other beings.

We have to try to focus our mind to see the benefits of making an effort to develop the good heart, and prevent harmful actions to others. We all hear a lot about the benefits of practising the good heart and the benefits of showing tolerance rather than hatred to others, but in practise what it means is that we practise the good heart to those who surround us, like one's family, one's partner and one's friends.

If we think of what benefits are gained from this practice, we will find that it can bring all those people closer together. This in turn brings a sense of satisfaction and security into our lives. On the other hand, if instead of showing patience to those close to us we show them hatred or pride. then what will be the outcome?

Through this analysis we can see that it is obvious that if we too follow the practice of the Bodhisattvas then we can benefit ourselves and others not only in this life, but also in all our future lives.

We will stop the teaching here. Does anybody have a question to ask?

Question: Is it more important to practice the Dharma out there in the world with your neighbours and other society members, or is it more important to do the ritual Buddhist practices? Maybe it's a balance between the two?

Answer: If you ask whether it is of more benefit to aim one's practise of Dharma to benefit the society or just

to benefit oneself, then if you practise Dharma for yourself, then that is a lot less beneficial than if many beings receive the benefits of your practice.

The Bodhisattvas have dedicated their lives for the welfare of other beings and so in their deeds there is no intention of any selfish reason or selfish concern. The Bodhisattvas have completely forsaken their own needs and aims, and so are totally and completely at the service of other beings. But, by engaging and completely giving themselves, and devoting their life to others, ironically the Bodhisattva's own purpose of life is automatically fulfilled.

In Australia we find that there are people who go to poor and undeveloped countries in order to help needy or desperate people. If you think, those people knowingly make the decision to give up all the comforts they have - the wonderful living conditions in this free country - to be surrounded by all those very poor people with infectious diseases etc., and they take on all those problems to help those people who are in need. Judging from these outer deeds, we can say that they accord within the Bodhisattva's way of life. Of course these people may also actually be Bodhisattvas. So there is no question that anyone who gives their life to serve society, to serve the many, is truly practising Dharma, and of course such a person is highly respected in the world as well.

To finish up we will chant the Buddha's mantra. Choose the correct posture, calming the mind inward, so as we chant the mantra just focus on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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