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

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

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As usual we will begin with a few minutes of breathing meditation together. Choose a suitable posture and make sure that your body is fully at rest.

Before beginning the meditation let us reflect on the purpose of practising meditation and what we are trying to achieve. Meditation is like a mental discipline. We focus the mind on a given object and then we put all our effort in trying to retain, or keep the mind on that object. By doing this the given object becomes more familiar and clearer in one's mind. As the mind becomes more familiar with the object then it becomes easier to rest the mind on it.

The benefit of this meditation practise is that we can stop the mind from wandering or from being influenced by our many unnecessary and disturbing thoughts. Without this discipline we cannot become aware of the variety of habitual patterns that have developed in our mind. If we just watch our mind we can see how it never stops generating thoughts, and never stops wandering after something. It always goes from one object to the next. As this wandering goes on, the mind is filled with so many uncontrollable thoughts and this results in unnecessary problems and worries. We can certainly feel some inward discomfort. Even if we outwardly enjoy a good healthy life, the unease that we experience in the mind due to agitated thoughts makes us unable to feel inner stability and happiness.

By watching our mind we can see that it is important and advantageous to control our mind and get used to the practice of disciplining it. If our mind is not controlled, we can generate many disturbing and misleading thoughts. By controlling the mind we can generate a certain state of mind which can oppose the negative effect of our disturbing thoughts. This state of mind can be retained through meditation practice by disciplining our mind to a particular object or a particular way of thinking. The effect of such a state of mind brings us more inner peace and stability and we feel more positive and joyous within ourselves.

What we are trying to achieve in meditation is to break this negative habitual pattern of the mind, and to cultivate a positive way of thinking and a positive state of mind within us. With this in mind, as we begin this meditation we should first try to remove or stop all the outgoing thoughts so that the mind rests within ourselves. Having done this, we just direct the focus of the mind on the incoming and outgoing breath. As we do this we put every effort into making sure that the mind never leaves the object of focus and doesn't get distracted and by any other object.

Through meditation practise we can gain some knowledge, some discriminating wisdom, about

knowing what is good and bad. So, through our meditation, try to develop the power of such discriminating knowledge as much as possible. Having done that then try to discard what our wisdom tells us is unskillful and negative; and try to adopt in thought and deed what we understand to be skilful and positive.

Last week in our discussion from the text we looked at the cause which prevents all sentient beings from reaching the full state of enlightenment, the attitude of self cherishing. Now the next verse says:

Verse 7

Uncontrollable wandering through rounds of existence

Is caused by our grasping at egos as real.
This ignorant attitude heralds the demon
Of selfish concern for our welfare alone:

"Grasping at egos" - the ego here is referring to the self cherishing attitude, "this ignorant attitude". "Heralds the demon of selfish concern for our welfare alone" refers to self grasping. The conception of self grasping is said to be the messenger of the self cherishing attitude.

The rest of verse 7 says:

We seek some security for our own egos;
We want only pleasure and shun any pain.
But now we must banish all selfish compulsion
And gladly take hardship for others' sake.

Here it is said that all our mistaken deeds and thoughts arise mainly from this self cherishing attitude and self grasping. The relationship between these two attitudes is such that the self cherishing attitude is like the leader, and the self grasping is like the servant or messenger of that self cherishing attitude. The general difference between these two attitudes is that the self cherishing attitude is referring to our very strong sense of ego, our selfish thoughts and concerns. Whereas when we say self grasping, this is the mistaken view of the way that this I, or the self, exists. We need to be able to distinguish between the two.

These two attitudes serve as a source of all the trouble we face in life. So it is best to understand this based on one's own experience. Deep down we have a strong concern for just ourselves alone. And because of that we always, day in and day out, are just concerned with our own welfare. We are always wishing that we find more happiness, get rid of our problems and get rid of our suffering. The effect of such a selfish attitude is that we don't show any concern for the needs of other beings. So we don't understand, nor do we look at, the other beings' needs. All we see is what we need, what we want and what we do not want. Within the context of our own experience, it is very obvious that if we have such strong

egos and selfish concerns, that we naturally discard the needs of others. This is how we experience the self cherishing attitude and the effects of that attitude in our thoughts and actions.

If we investigate how and why we experience this intense egocentric mind, then as well as investigating how this 'I' exists in our mind, we see the 'I' as existing independently of our mind, or inherently existing on its own. This is a mistaken view of the way the I exists in actual reality. The conception of self grasping refers to this view of holding the 'I' or the self as inherent or existing independently.

We then go further by investigating how we can gain satisfaction and achieve all our desired goals. The desired goal is, of course, achieving happiness and eliminating suffering. However, with a selfish attitude we cannot achieve our goals. This is because we think that the cause of our happiness and the cause of our problems depend upon outer conditions and other beings. It is important to know, within the context of our own experience, that with mere selfish concern we cannot bring happiness into our own life, let alone benefiting others.

Verse 7 continues

But now we must banish all selfish compulsion
And gladly take hardship for others' sake.

Here the text implies the practice of Bodhisattva beings. It is saying that the Bodhisattvas have abandoned the thought and the attitude of seeking happiness and pleasure just for themselves, or the thought of eliminating their own pain or suffering. Bodhisattvas have totally eradicated any such selfish concerns. Instead, they take delight in taking on pain and hardship in order to benefit other beings. We should also think of trying to see the benefits of following the Bodhisattvas' deeds in our own life. In following the Bodhisattvas' deeds we try to change our selfish attitude for the attitude of cherishing other beings. We see that by cherishing other beings, and by working for, or serving other beings, that in fact we can truly achieve the purpose of our own life.

If we think of our own situation, it is so obvious that in order to live a stable and happy life then sometimes we have to be more tolerant to others, and sometimes we have to take the loss and give the victory to others. In the end we look back and see that we have truly gained more than if we are always just fighting for the victories. It is very obvious that experiencing something desirable or undesirable, pleasurable or painful, doesn't just depend on outer conditions, but to a large extent depends on our own mental attitude. Even if there is some outer circumstance that brings a lot of harm, suffering and misery, our experience is still determined by our mental attitude.

This becomes clear when we think of a situation how, when we are inwardly very weak, a minor outer circumstance can be a great cause of suffering. So it is good to understand how much we can benefit ourselves

by bringing about some internal, rather than external, change in our lives.

We now finish with the recitation of Buddha's mantra. Once again, choose the right posture, rest your body and calm the mind. As we recite the mantra, try to focus the mind on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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