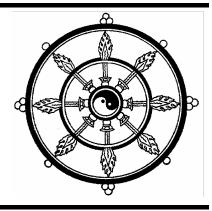
Dharmarakshita's "*The* Wheel *of* Sharp Weapons" A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga Translated by Samdup Tsering

৩৩ ব্রাঁ শ্র্রাঁর কার্কার ক্রান্য শ্রো



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First we will do a short breathing meditation. Choose a sitting posture which most suits you. Stop the mind from being influenced by all external objects of distraction, and let the mind just rest within. Cultivate the intention to not let the mind wander off. Direct the attention of the mind towards the incoming and outgoing breath. Try to maintain this mental attention and focus single pointedly on the breath.

Meditation benefits us by bringing peace in our mind and rest to our body. We know we are at rest when both our mind and body are at rest. We need to understand the connection between ourselves and the mind and body. The most powerful element in this relationship is the mind, which determines our actions of body and speech. We can see that whenever our mind is calm and peaceful it influences our actions and makes them more gentle. As a result of these peaceful actions, we find ourselves in a peaceful situation, having a peaceful experience. On the other hand, if our mind is unruly, wild and disturbed, then naturally our actions of body and speech will also become wild, resulting in some disturbance or unhappiness in our life.

Now we will continue the teaching on the 'Wheel of Sharp Weapons'. We are up to the last line of verse 11:

Hereafter let's take on this suffering ourselves.

Verse 11 is referring to the meditation technique of 'Giving and Taking' as a means to increase our love and compassion towards other beings. This last line sums up the meaning of the meditation of Taking. This is to realise that all the suffering and all the pain that we experience in this life has no other source than in the harm we have caused to many other beings - in both this and past lives - with a self-centred motivation, with a self cherishing mind.

It is said that engaging in this meditation of Taking, you can visualise the Guru Lord Buddha upon the crown of one's head, and see that the true cause of our suffering and pain is causing suffering to others. So pray to the Guru Buddha on one's crown: 'may all the sufferings of all other beings fall upon myself'. So having clearly recognised the cause of the suffering and then prayed to the Guru Buddha, then visualise sending the breath out through the nostrils in the form of rays of light which go to all the suffering sentient beings. These rays of light relieve and completely free all sentient beings from all their suffering. Imagine that through this giving, all other beings attain everlasting happiness.

On the inward breath imagine that you are breathing in

the black smoke of all beings' sufferings, and that you are taking on all their suffering and pain. Then imagine that it all dissolves into your self cherishing mind, and all their suffering immediately vanishes. This is the meditation technique of Taking upon yourself all the sufferings of all other living beings.

This technique of Taking and Giving is especially useful if you are undergoing a painful disease. If you worry about your pain and the disease, then this can make the pain worse, rather than lessening it. This meditation is not a direct remedy for the disease, but it certainly can help your mental attitude towards pain, and keep the mind from reliving the pain. This meditation also has the potential to enhance our compassion towards others. For example, when you feel better you will see that you have developed more compassion towards others, and have developed more of an understanding of what is suffering and what is pain. This is a very spiritual quality.

It is also said that the meditation of Giving and Taking is very powerful in purifying the karmic negativities in one's mind. There are many examples of people who have found that this type of meditation has helped them to cope with a painful disease, giving them more strength and spirit in their mind. In some cases the pain is relieved and they are even cured of the diseases which haven't responded to other treatment.

Questions and Answers

If anybody has any questions please feel welcome to ask them.

- *Q:* Can you use the meditation for mental illness?
- *A*: Yes, the 11th verse focuses on the mental illness: Verse 11

The depressed and forlorn when we feel mental anguish

This is the Wheel of Sharp Weapons returning full circle upon us

From wrongs we have done till now we have deeply disturbed the minds of others

Hereafter let's take on this suffering ourself.

This verse focuses on the Taking on of the mental illness or the suffering of other beings. We will do the explanation next week.

Q: I wasn't clear whether the giving and taking was directly related to the outgoing and incoming breath. Is it necessarily to do with the breath, each time giving and

taking on each alternate breath?

A: Geshe Doga says it is not necessary to link the technique of Giving and Taking with the breathing exercise. In fact it is recommended that first you practice this technique of Giving and Taking without focusing on the inhaling or the exhaling of the breath. You can first practice the Giving and Taking by simply imaging that, when you do the Taking, you take all the sufferings of other beings in the form of dark smoke. In English we use the term blackish smoke but literally in Tibetan it is a 'darkish light'. So whatever this darkish form, it enters you through your nostrils and then dissolves into your self-cherishing mind. Then all the causes of suffering disappear.

When you do the Giving, imagine that you give all your happiness to other beings by sending them white rays of light through your nostrils. Become familiar with the practice of Giving and Taking in this way, then afterwards you can link this technique with the breathing meditation. This is what the text instructs, so there must be some proper reason. Maybe it's initially difficult for some practitioners to do this technique with the breathing exercise. However, if it suits you and you don't find any problems with it, you can do this practice with the breathing meditation.

Q: Can Geshela elaborate on the aspect of purification. How it is purifying to do the Giving and Taking practice.?

A: In general when we talk of negative energies or positive energies we are not talking of visual forms, but the accumulation of these energies due to our mental attitudes towards others. We usually create our negativities by showing some negative attitude or state of mind towards either ordinary beings or higher beings like some holy object of refuge. Likewise, if we generate a positive state of mind towards these beings, then positive actions and positive energies follow. For example, if you show compassion towards others, then this helps to purify any negativities or harmful deeds we have done towards that being.

When we do the meditation of Giving and Taking, we blame our own self cherishing mind and show compassion towards others to whom we have caused suffering. It is this mental change or transformation which brings about the purifying of negativities.

There are many stories of the Indian master, the Great Asanga. One tells how, after striving in meditation for over 12 years, Asanga still had had no vision of Maitreya Buddha. As he came out of meditation he saw, lying on the road, a she-dog covered with maggots which were eating her skin and flesh. Asanga felt compassion for that dog, but didn't know how to remove the maggots without harming them. So, out of compassion, he tried to remove the maggots gently with his tongue. Then, suddenly, he was able to see Maitreya Buddha. Through the force of this compassion, he purified the last of his obscurations to being able to see the Maitreya Buddha.

Now we will chant the Buddha's Mantra. Again, sit in meditation posture, bring the mind inward and place its

focus on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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