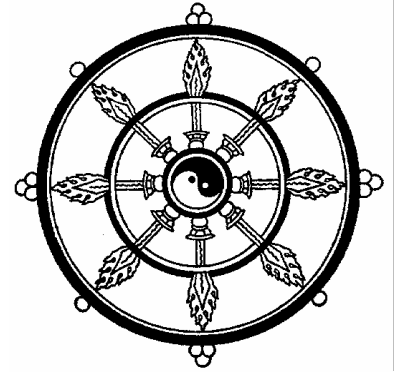


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

ཨོ སྤྱིང་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



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Let's first do a few minutes breathing meditation. Make yourself comfortable in the sitting posture.

Before beginning, we should think through why we engage in meditation. The purpose is to gain control of our minds. If we examine our mind's natural tendencies, we can see - that it wanders ceaselessly, more often than not, under the influence of negative habits. We have hardly any control over our mind; its momentum is like water poured on a hill, it naturally flows downward. If we make no attempt to control the mind, it naturally flows downward towards some negative thought. To set our minds in a positive state is like pulling water uphill - we have to exert a great deal of effort.

So you should be sure that the mind definitely needs to be pacified and that through mental training, your mind will become more positive. With this motivation, we begin the meditation.

The first thing we must do is to remove all outgoing thoughts so that the mind just rests within. This allows us to direct the mind towards the object of the meditation - the object here is your breath. We then start the meditation, and try to not be distracted by any other object. Just sit the mind on your breath.

The benefit of developing our mind is that it becomes more positive, stable and free of confusion. When we undertake the practice of transforming our minds, one of the best tools is utilising our own wisdom or sense of discrimination. Meditation practice involves getting rid of negative states of the mind, and developing more positive qualities - and it works by training the mind to stay within a certain state. This is done by focusing on a given object - in Tibetan we literally say that meditation means 'getting used to'. It is a practice in which we train over and over to concentrate the mind on certain objects.

The effect of meditation practice is to get rid of unnecessary thoughts and negative states of mind. It is a process of cleansing our minds, or our inner self. Through this process, we can stop the mind bringing problems into our lives. When we make progress in meditation, our minds becomes more pure, and our thinking, clear. Our minds then brings peace and happiness into our lives.

To be convinced that meditation practice can bring more peace and happiness into our lives, we have to use a sense of discrimination in examining our mindstream. In the mindstream, we see many different types of thoughts

rising and falling like waves, each directly influencing our feelings and emotions. Sometimes we recognise - even just for a moment - that a particular state of mind can have a strong influence on us. One thought can be a source of unending confusion and suffering. If that's the case - if, through mediation practice and the power of our own intellect, we see this destructive thought - by applying meditation practice and finding a way of removing it, we will feel great relief. By getting rid of just one thought, our whole life can be changed and there is more peace, calm and clarity within.

Once we have seen the benefits and decide to undertake meditation practice, when it comes to engaging in the practice, we may find it extremely difficult - especially if we are beginners - because it challenges our uncontrolled mind. You find you cannot concentrate on the meditation object even for a minute. Because the practice can be difficult in the beginning, it is no reason to be discouraged and think that you cannot achieve the goals of meditation. There are many reasons to keep trying - the main one being that we can attain full control over this mind. It is all a matter of practice, of getting used to or familiarising ourselves with our practice. That is what the meditation is - doing the practice over and over, without losing courage, but always remaining firm and positive about our practice.

As you continue doing the same practice day after day, after a while, you will be able to do the practice for over half an hour, and eventually an hour. Later, after further practice, you will come to a point when you can do it as long as you wish, without a great deal of effort or pain. This is because we have become more used to that practice - the mind is used to the object of meditation.

It is said that, no matter how many faults we have in our minds, it still has one good, natural quality - its flexibility. If we train the mind, it will respond to what we teach it. As the famous Indian Buddhist master, Shantideva, said, there maybe someone you hate so much that even hearing the name of that person upsets or frightens you. But after befriending that very same person, you are unhappy when they are not around. This shows that the mind is not rigid, not something we cannot change. As Shantideva said, a person could scare you - even just hearing about them scares you. But when that person becomes a friend, you feel insecure without them. Our mental attitudes can change dramatically.

Looking at our habits of mind is in no sense to remove

ourselves from our main concern- to find happiness and avoid suffering. On the contrary, we have to learn to see that our way of thinking has a direct effect on our ability to find happiness and eliminate suffering. If we investigate, we find there are some states of mind that are harmful, yet which our minds sustain even though they don't help us. Instead of helping us to find happiness and eliminate suffering, these thoughts serve as a source of unending dissatisfaction, they can bring harm to us physically and to our relationships with others.

If we become more aware of these thoughts as they arise, we can see why our lives are unstable and why we feel that, despite our good circumstances, we still feel deprived of peace and rest. We will see that these thoughts are useless, in the sense that they don't bring happiness or solve problems. It is like we are caught in a net of these disturbing thoughts, which makes it impossible for us to find lasting peace and inner stability.

If we were to remove these disturbing thoughts through meditation, we would suddenly find ourselves more relaxed and peaceful than we had ever felt before. And the peace and happiness we experience in meditation is something that flows out naturally from within. When we talk of outer happiness, it is conditional and not natural because the experience does not fully arise from us. It depends upon outer things, so it can change quickly- how long it will last is unpredictable and it does not provide a true sense of security. Rather than hoping for peace and happiness to come from an outer source, the best peace and happiness is that which arises from within.

We will finish the teaching here. As usual, we will chant the Buddha's mantra. Once again check your sitting posture, relax your body and, getting rid of all mental distractions, focus the mind on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

*Transcribed from the tapes by Jenny Brooks
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