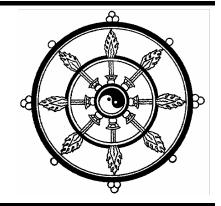
Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons" A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga Translated by Samdup Tsering

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18 February 1998

First, we will do some breathing meditation. Choose a sitting posture with the back straight, and fully relax every part of the body.

If one's mind, as well as the body, is at rest we can truly be at peace. To bring about a relaxed frame of mind, we try to get rid of distracting thoughts and fully bring the mind inward. Without any object of focus, however, the mind cannot sit, so we use our incoming and outgoing breath as the object. In breathing meditation, we try to focus the mind on the breath with such concentration that the mind becomes inseparable from our breath. In other words, we sit the mind on the breath with single-minded concentration.

To know the benefits of meditation, we have to investigate and become familiar with the mind. This benefits ourselves and others. Basically, meditation practice calms unruly thoughts. It also produces more positive states of mind. If we don't control our minds, they give way to various negative states, which we refer to as mental delusions. The presence of a delusion is indicated by unhappiness and discomfort in one's mind.

In our inner lives we sometimes, without knowing the reason, experience sudden unhappiness. For instance, in the morning we may experience well-being, but then suddenly feel unease in the mind. If we don't investigate or analyse, it can seem that this unease has no cause or condition. But if we look closely, there is a cause - the arising of a mental delusion or negative state of mind. Whenever negative states of mind arise, the effects are undesirable. For instance, if we generate jealousy or anger, we feel discomfort or unease. But if we enjoy a positive state of mind - if our inner continuum is gentle, 'soft' - we feel peaceful.

We practise meditation *not* to reach or find something we don't have. If we were dealing with something far from us or which we don't possess, that would be difficult. But in meditation practice we are dealing with something within us. If we talk of meditation as a means to enhance peace in our mind, we can see that the mind has the potential to cultivate love and compassion for other beings. Even such highly evolved beings as Buddhas and Bodhisattvas regard this quality of love and compassion as an object of veneration. Nevertheless, we have to see our potential to cultivate love and compassion to others as something we possess within us, something precious and priceless. It is so precious because, if we could fully develop these good qualities, they would serve as a source of everlasting happiness to

ourselves and others. If we develop love and compassion, all the mental delusions that bother our mind and bring unease will cease to exist. If we feel love and compassion towards others, for example, there is no room to feel jealousy, pride, competitiveness or any other state of mind that brings unease within us.

What is the most beneficial spiritual practice to do to cultivate and develop love and compassion? If this is the main goal of our spiritual practice, we already have the resource of our potential for love and compassion. Additionally, we must see the benefits of practicing love and compassion in improving our present situation and our immediate future.

The main practice is trying to be a kind and warmhearted person, particularly towards those with whom you have a close relationship. When we talk about the importance of practicing love and compassion, we have to start the practice with those close to us. This means always trying our best to love those close to us, to be more patient with them, to show our good qualities, our soft nature - this is how we show love and compassion. It also means trying to stop showing anger and causing harm to them. If we show love and compassion to all the people we interact with, the quality of our relationships will improve, and there will be more people out there that we can call friends, and who regard us as a friend. We experience harmony between ourself and others and, as a result of the warm feeling we have created, there is a lot of joy and security in our minds and in the minds of those others.

But perhaps we're selfish and negative towards those close to us. Instead of speaking softly, we speak roughly; instead of showing a pleasant face, we show an angry face. If we do this, not only do we cause problems to others, but we also cannot find peace, happiness and stability in our own lives. If we are not good at dealing with other people, we find our own life more difficult because, to live a stable and secure life, it is difficult to be totally self-sufficient, and not depend on others. No matter how much we think we can live independently, we always depend on others. Even if you have an abundance of money, you have to go shopping and buy things with it, so still you depend on others.

So we can see the benefit of cultivating love and compassion. Try to consider this your main daily practice. Of course, it is good for you to understand the meaning of the profound and vast teachings. However, it doesn't matter as much as practicing love and

compassion towards others, trying to live our life peacefully, with fewer mental delusions, and enjoying harmonious relationships with others.

On the other hand, you must see the disadvantages of showing anger and hatred, and cultivating a negative attitude towards others. From our experience we know that, when anger takes over our mind, we lose our peace and self-control. And if you ask anyone else - whether a follower of spiritual teachings or not - they all know that anger is a bad thing. After considering the difference between love and compassion, and anger and hatred, which attitude should we adopt in order to make good progress in our meditation?

Geshe-la said that two days ago in Landcox Park he observed a lady feeding all the birds, including many ducks. As she was feeding the birds, they came very close to her to eat and were calm and completely relaxed. You could see that the birds and the person feeding them were all in a very peaceful state. After the she finished feeding and was leaving, the birds even tried to follow her. Here you could observe the effect of showing love and compassion towards others, in terms of promoting peace and happiness among other beings.

So with this we finish the talk. As usual, we will chant the Buddha's mantra. Once again, sit in meditation posture, relaxing the mind and the body, and focus the mind on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

Transcribed from the tapes by Jenny Brooks Edited by Mary-Lou Considine Edit checked against the tapes by Richard Garward Edited Version

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