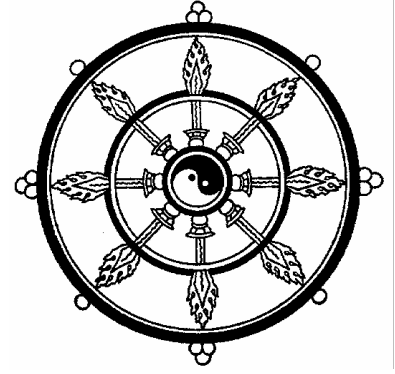


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

ཧྲུབ་སྤྱོད་མཚན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



4 March 1998

Usually in this sitting posture, you are supposed to keep your legs crossed. Of course, if you can, choose the cross-legged posture. But if you find that posture difficult, or you are not used to it, you don't need to struggle to sit in that posture. If it causes discomfort or soreness in your leg, it is better not to choose that posture because whatever posture you choose has to be comfortable and relaxing. When our whole body is relaxed and comfortable, it is more suitable for meditation; whereas if you have some ache in any part of the body, it is hard to concentrate on your meditation because your mind will think of that pain. So just choose the posture.

As we rest physically, we should also take care of our minds. If the mind is not resting, we defeat the purpose of physical rest, because we cannot be fully at rest. We should have some understanding of the mind - that by making an effort to train or develop the mind, we have the tremendous potential to bring more peace and happiness. We can achieve a lot in terms of developing our minds. If we compare the mind with the body - in terms of developing its potential, power and energy - we can see that the good energy we can generate with respect to the mind has no limit. The more good qualities, such as generosity, we develop by training our minds, the more we can develop other good qualities.

This explains why the faults associated with our minds are only temporary, and haven't polluted the mind's fundamental nature. We say the fundamental nature of the mind is absolutely pure. Overcoming obstacles within the mind and developing its good qualities are a matter of making an effort in mind training. On the other hand, if we think of what we can achieve with our bodies, there is a limit. No matter what physical exercise we do, to walk faster or jump a longer distance for example, there is a limit beyond which the body cannot go. We can see that the mind is not like that - its potential for positive qualities is without limit. So we do not have to feel discouraged whenever we confront some problem within our minds, or some difficulty in our meditation practice.

On the negative side, we see that the mind has this habit of not staying within and, as a result, it brings various problems. As said before, if we just sit in a physically peaceful environment and don't check the mind, it wanders off and ponders some problem. If the mind is unchecked, it can stay like that and our thoughts will continue to revolve around the object that is the source of

disturbance or unease. After the mind returns to the present, you feel it has returned with problems. However, as said before, if we think on the positive side, through applying discipline we can remove all disturbing thoughts. With these things in mind, we do the meditation.

Without controlling the mind, it would be somewhere else, giving way to various kinds of disturbing thought. As long as the mind is caught up with these thoughts, there is no way we will be at ease. Realising this, we try to let go of the wandering thoughts and gently direct our focus to breathing in and breathing out. In this meditation, one of the two main factors is mindfulness - we have to be mindful of the object of meditation, and here it is the breath. With mindfulness we make it possible for the mind to focus on its object. That part of the mind that enables us to focus the mind on the object is concentration, which is another important factor in meditation. If our mindfulness is not strong or a bit loose, we cannot fully focus on the object of meditation so we'll do the meditation for just a few minutes.

Because we seek happiness in our lives, we must apply some practice to the mind because we are talking about our own happiness, not about taking possession of another's happiness. Our main hope for achieving our own happiness lies with the mind and body. If the body is healthy and the mind is clear and has a positive way of thinking, we will naturally find this happiness. Again, we have to realise the importance of applying some training or practice to the mind to develop more good qualities and remove all faults and delusions. If we produce the right state of mind and gain this inner happiness and peace, it becomes a lot easier to achieve whatever we seek in life, whether it is a spiritual or worldly goal. In the long run, it is more beneficial for us to develop the mind than the body which, as said before, has limits to its development. Age, for instance, can be an obstacle to physical development.

Geshe Doga says that, not long ago on the pilgrimage in Bodhgaya, to get to one sacred place they had to cross a small creek. In the past, Geshe Doga said he could have quite easily jumped over the creek and this time he said to the others that he would jump. But the others said he should not, and he also knew he could not make it. Thinking back to when he was 12 or 13, he remembers as a young teenage boy being physically fit and always proud of his body. He was good at physical activities like high jump and long jump, and could run very fast.

He was always physically strong and, because of that, he always had the mental attitude that he would never give an inch to others; he was confident that he could fight anyone.

Now he feels the opposite. He has lost that physical advantage; however, compared to those days he could say he feels much better in the sense that mentally he is softer, gentler and kinder to other beings. What this is saying is that in the long run you get more benefit if you decrease the delusions in your mind, and increase the positive qualities like honesty, compassion and kindness. If we could develop such qualities in our minds, naturally we would find more happiness and fewer problems in our lives. This is because what we experience is a result of our actions, and our actions - whether good or bad, skilful or unskilful - are predetermined by thought. We usually have a thought first and then engage in an action. Whether that action is beneficial to our life or not, whether it is good or bad depends on the preceding thought. In this way, we realise how important it is to train our minds, so that we can be more positive and honest, and kinder.

Another point we are trying to make is that when we are young, most of the time we are physically active and much of our experience of pleasure results from these physical activities. However, as we age, we can't manage the physical activities we could in the past. As a result, we find we cannot physically bring satisfaction to our lives now, so we find our lives to be empty, and we cannot relax or enjoy ourselves. This shows that we're yet to learn how to find meaning and satisfaction within. It is important then, even at a young age, along with the physical things we do, to apply meditation training to our minds to develop more knowledge of ourselves, and to try to sustain peace and happiness independent of physical pleasure.

If we can do this, then later on, when we reach old age, if we are used to this practice of mind training, it doesn't matter to us even if we can't find physical pleasure - mentally, we can still be peaceful and happy about life, about ourselves. By enjoying such peace and happiness in our minds, we support the good health of our bodies in old age. In this way, it is important to consider the benefit of spiritual practice over the whole of one's life. Geshe Doga says that he gives this advice to others based on his own experience.

We will finish the teaching now, and recite the Buddha's mantra. As we recite the mantra, again sit in the meditation posture, relaxing the body, and direct your mental focus to the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

*Transcribed from the tapes by Jenny Brooks
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Edit checked against the tapes by Richard Garward
Edited Version*

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