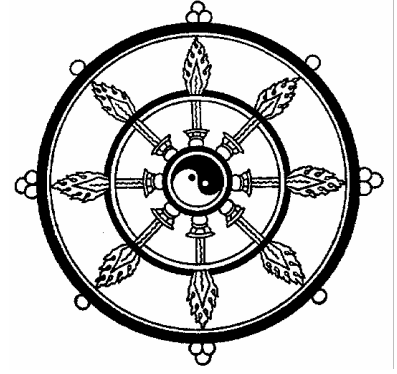


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

ཨྱ སྤྱིང་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



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First of all we are going to do some breathing meditation. Sit in a posture that is comfortable and relaxing for your body. Try to get rid of the mind's habit of being occupied with various objects and events from the past, present or future. Then try to rest the mind within. Make sure the mind is not disturbed or distracted by other thoughts; rather, just focus on the outgoing and incoming breath. Try to make sure you have single-pointed concentration on the breath.

It is important to know what we are trying to achieve through meditation practice. We are not seeking some temporary escape from a problem or some temporary peace for ourselves. Rather, we are seeking something that can benefit us all the time, not only when we are engaged in meditation practice, but also when we come out of meditation practice and engage in day-to-day activities. If we consider positively what we can change in our lives, we see that we can change our thoughts and actions - get rid of the negativities we create through the way we talk or act and replace these with something positive and wholesome.

What brings the most benefit to us is good character. Each of us has the responsibility of making him or herself a good person, a good human being. If we consider how to achieve this, we see it is indispensable that first we gain some knowledge of our own minds, because the mind is the source of all our actions. Our meditation practice calms and softens our minds, and thus we can see calmness and gentleness in our verbal and physical deeds.

If the aim of our meditation practice were to develop an understanding of our minds - as well as increasing concentration and mindfulness - then if we made progress in our meditation, it would have some effect on our thoughts and actions. Even when not doing sitting meditation practice, we would see the benefit of our practice: we would be more mindful of our actions, more aware of our own minds. We would be more observant, able to see when a faulty thought arose in the mind, or when we had created a negative action of body or speech. Not only would we have this discerning power of seeing our mind and actions, but through this we would be able to make an effort to correct faulty actions, or at least to realise that some of the thoughts we generate are harmful and destructive. We would see our harmful thoughts and actions as something to purify, whereas we would see positive thoughts as being beneficial, and we could sustain and develop these.

As we have said, meditation is about controlling one's mind. We may think, what happiness will I bring to my life by controlling my mind? Even if we can control one negative state of mind - for instance the angry mind - it has great benefit. The happiness and comfort we seek does not necessarily always comes from material conditions like enjoying food - we can only enjoy the taste at the time, it doesn't have a lasting benefit. But if we imagine that we could free the mind from anger by being able to prevent it from arising, we see how much happiness that could bring to us.

Think about a time when your mind was boiling with anger and compare it with a time when it was not influenced by anger. At the time when the mind was filled with the delusion, we can see how it affected our perception of the world - even our friends seemed to have faults. We felt unease and discomfort and whatever we said or did, even the way we appeared to others, was unpleasant. The actions motivated by anger cause harm to other beings or to our close friends. Under the influence of anger our actions do not accord with the spiritual teachings, or even accord with worldly ideas of good conduct. If we could, however, have prevented the anger we could have prevented these shortcomings and found more peace and happiness. This is why we must appreciate meditation practice in terms of its direct benefits.

What we are trying to learn here is to contemplate how controlling - or not controlling - the mind can make a difference to our daily actions and experiences. We have to see the benefits of meditation practice in terms of how we can achieve control over the mind.

Now we will do the commentary on verse 34 from the text *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*, which reads:

When prejudice, polio or strokes have us crippled
And external forces or harm rise against us,
This is the wheel of sharp weapons returning
Full circle upon us from wrongs we have done.
'Til now we have collected vast stores of non-virtue
By breaking our vows and offending protectors
In our practice from guru-devotion to Tantra;
Hereafter lets banish all prejudiced views.

As this verse is self-explanatory, we won't go in to it in detail. What it is pointing out is a situation in which one suffers because of disease or some other form of pain caused by external conditions. We may blame external conditions or even think it is something caused by an evil spirit. However, it shows here that the basic cause is the

negativities we have accumulated through the actions of our three doors of body, speech and mind. As the text says, in order to prevent such suffering we have to abandon negative or unwholesome actions.

This verse uses the term 'Tantra' but here the term tantra means some spiritual or wholesome practice. Another word for tantra is mantra - 'man' means mind, and the 'tra' means protector or protection, so the literal meaning is 'mind protection'. In the context of the secret teachings of Buddhism, tantra or mantra means protecting the mind from the influence of ordinary perceptions. As there are different levels of tantra, it can also be explained at different levels. However, here the term tantra or mantra is used to refer to Dharma practice, like the practice of the three stages of the path for the person of small, medium or great scope.

It says in the last sentence, "Hereafter lets banish all prejudiced views". These prejudiced views are the source of all the negative or unwholesome actions we create; in other words, 'prejudiced views' refers to the undisciplined thoughts we generate. When our mind is filled with such disturbing thoughts, we lose our self-control and create many negative actions. If we have a gross type of disturbing thought, we cannot even sleep. What it is saying here is that if we cannot control such disturbing thoughts in the mind, it is difficult to stop doing negative actions. As is said, to counteract negative actions - which one should see as the main cause of the various sufferings we undergo - one can do the practice of giving and taking meditation and through this try to purify negativities and increase positive qualities within one.

If anyone has a question there is room for one. Otherwise we finish. There is only room for a very easy question!

Q: With tonglen, if you are experiencing negative emotions like strong anger or attachment is it appropriate to take on the other person's anger and attachment as the practice of tonglen?

A: While the anger is strong in you, it will be difficult to actually do the meditation. When you have strong anger in you, it is hard to even concentrate the mind, so it would be hard to do this meditation thinking of the reason for doing it, or what you are supposed to 'give' or 'take'. It is better first to try to do something to calm or pacify the mind, for instance, some breathing meditation. After having pacified the anger, if you engage in the meditation of tonglen or give and take, it really looks like you're giving and taking something!

Before you overcome your own anger there is also a risk that your anger might become even stronger if, you take the anger off the other person. Of course, that depends on your way of thinking or your approach to your meditation.

That is the end of the teaching tonight. Now stop all outgoing thoughts and, making sure your body is relaxed, direct the attention of the mind to the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

*Transcribed from the tapes by Jenny Brooks
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