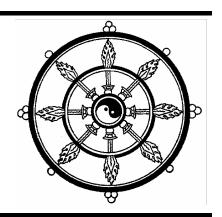
Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons" A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga Translated by Samdup Tsering

७७ र्ते ह्वें र मर्कें मक प्रांपेर लें।

20 May 1998



We'll begin with a few minutes of breathing meditation, so just relax the body and sit in the meditation posture.

Until now, one has been totally overpowered and led by desire, hatred and ignorance, the three main types of delusion. Due to this, one has found no escape or freedom from continuous problems or difficulties. Having realised the harm we have received from these three delusions, we should now make the firm resolution to challenge and defeat them so that they no longer have the upper hand in our lives. These three delusions are referred to as the three poisonous states of mind, and we engage in meditation to uproot them. So, as we 've said, we begin our meditation by relaxing the body, trying to stabilise the mind inward, and trying to get rid of the influence of these three delusions - desire, hatred and ignorance.

After we remove the influence of the three poisonous delusions, we can proceed to develop inner stability and gain continuous control over the mind. We thus undertake the breathing meditation wherein we direct the mind to the breath, single-pointedly, not allowing any other object or thought to distract the mind from this single-pointed focus.

We should try to identify the three delusions within ourselves because they are the source of all other delusions or negative states of mind. The effect of a negative state of mind is to bring discomfort and disturbance. The more we understand about the delusions, the better we can understand how to overcome them.

We need to better understand our own minds because we need to counter the wrong idea that all our sufferings or problems are caused by external conditions. Normally, we tend to believe that whatever we think or do in life is always right. Whenever there is a problem or something goes wrong, we find some other person or cause to blame - we believe that the causes or conditions are always outward.

Meditation practice changes our perception, directing our focus within, towards our thoughts and actions. The aim is to develop more positive qualities within the mind and transform oneself into a gentle, peaceful person. But without acknowledging the faults in our own thinking or actions, we can never overcome them. And the result, in terms of improving our character, is that we make no progress. So meditation practice is more than just stopping conversation and speech and not moving one's body. This may relax us, but it is only temporary.

Rather we have to think of meditation as bringing about a positive effect within our minds - a more positive way of thinking, a truer way of seeing things. It is only when we turn our minds inward that we can see our problems; when we feel emotionally disturbed, for example, we can see that the real cause of this disturbance is our own delusions. Even if our outer conditions are unfavorable, they are not the true cause of our problems: the true cause is allowing those conditions to give rise to delusions.

We hear that if you follow a spiritual practice, you will receive many blessings and spiritual benefit. But these spiritual benefits depend upon practice, they are not something you automatically receive when you study the spiritual teachings. Your life is not automatically better; your problems remain unsolved. But if you sincerely put the Dharma into practice, you will receive benefits and blessings, because the benefit occurs in your own mind.

For instance, say someone has a lot of problems due to strong desire or attachment; the only way to overcome those problems is to put the spiritual teachings into practice by engaging in meditation. Meditation involves identifying one's desires and knowing the shortcomings these desires bring to one's life. One then applies the remedy to desire in meditation practice. After doing meditation for a while, this person will find himself with less desire, or even completely free of the influence of desire. Such people will understand that what has benefited them is Dharma. That Dharma, however, is no other than one's own practice, one's own meditation. So when we read about spiritual blessings and benefits they are no other than the benefits of one's practice. When we talk of spiritual practice or Dharma, we are talking about something within ourselves. When we integrate the Dharma with our practice, we can see its enormous potential for giving us more peace and happiness in this life, as well as giving us the ultimate potential of achieving liberation and full enlightenment in the future.

All the Lord Buddha's teachings are aimed at transforming or controlling the minds of living beings. We should therefore see what relation this aim has to our own minds, and whether it is possible for us to shape our minds to the teachings of the Buddha. To follow the Buddha's teachings and develop the mind, we have to work hard to overcome habitual, negative states of mind. But it is easy for us think that our spiritual practice is too difficult and just give it up.

Not that we don't want a calmer or less deluded mind -

even in our mundane affairs we wish for activities that are easy to do and make money quickly. The reality, however, is that to make more money we have to work harder, to achieve a higher goal we have to exert more effort. Likewise, what we expect to achieve in our spiritual practice is a higher goal. Therefore, we have to encourage ourselves to make more effort, even if the result of our spiritual practice does not ripen quickly, like a flower blossoming overnight. Such a thing is only possible if, in our past life, we amassed enormous merit. It is important in spiritual practice not to lose our motivation - even if progress is very slow, it is important to continue with our practice.

Whether we are pursuing a spiritual or a worldly goal, if it is something higher, we have to make a greater effort, show greater determination and courage, and utilise more skills and knowledge. If our goal though is small, we require less effort, less spirit and less resources to reach it. There are spiritual beings like the Bodhisattvas whose goal is to achieve full Enlightenment to benefit all living beings. Bodhisattvas do not just think of their own needs but the needs of all other beings. So the effort they make is enormous and the spirit and determination they show in achieving their goal is also enormous - far greater than that of a spiritual practitioner following a lesser path, like a hearer or solitary realiser who seeks a lesser goal.

Even in our daily life, it is important to check our desires. If we wish for too many things, or things that are too expensive, we have to realise that to fulfill these desires we need more resources, more skills, more knowledge and harder work. If we are not prepared to work harder perhaps for a long period of time, or if we do not have the necessary skills and knowledge to fulfill that desire, there is no point in having that desire. Maintaining that desire is just a source of frustration, bringing more discouragement and hopelessness to our lives. If our desire is great, we cannot afford to be complacent spending time lazily with no interest, no willingness to do things - because this will bring more suffering. Try to realise this in your spiritual practice too. If our aim is something lasting and ultimate, in order to reach it we have to generate a strong determination to make the effort as long as it takes - days, months, years. Then, if one puts in some effort continuously, it is possible to eventually realise that far-reaching goal.

That is the end of the teaching. To finish this session, we will chant some Buddha mantras. Once again, try to relax yourself and calm your mind, and use the mantra as an object of concentration.

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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