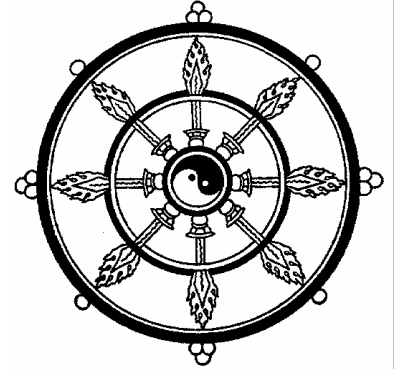


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

འདྲེས་སྤྱོད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



1 July 1998

As usual we will begin with a few minutes of breathing meditation together. Make yourself comfortable in a sitting position and relax your body. Next, check what type of thought is in your mind, and whether it is influenced by some outer distraction. A distracted or uncalm mind is in a negative state, and this is the real enemy in our lives. The enemy is within us, not outside of us. The mind is the main cause of all the difficulties and problems that we face in life. It is the main obstacle to achieving a happy and peaceful life. The real enemy is this unstable, uncalm state of mind. So try to generate a strong determination to confront, challenge and defeat this type of mind. Meditation is the way to fight and gain victory over this distracted mind.

Start the meditation practice by removing all wandering thoughts. The mind turns inward as the outward thoughts are being gradually removed. The mind will stay turned inward when all thoughts of external objects are stopped. The mind now has no object, but it is totally peaceful. Try to remain in that state of mind. When an object is about to enter the mind, then direct the focus of the mind onto the inhaling and exhaling of the breath. Try to concentrate on the breath single pointedly without being distracted by any other objects.

Meditation teaches us how to find the peace and happiness within us. It also teaches us how to destroy the enemies of this peace and happiness. This is different to what we normally regard as the enemies of our peace and happiness. Our normal perception views both our enemies and our happiness as something external to us, that outside objects directly bring us suffering. For example, someone who brings a loss to our conditions, like our property or possessions would be considered to be our enemy.

In terms of external phenomena, we have learnt to discriminate between what harms us and what brings us benefit. We consider drugs as something bad and destructive in our lives because they can destroy our good health and we consider some external objects as beneficial and useful to our lives. Similarly, in meditation, we find out which objects are beneficial and which objects are destructive - within ourselves. In order to see the enemy within, or the source of our peace and happiness, it is important to always examine and observe one's own mind. By performing this self-investigation, we are then able to recognise the inner enemy.

We come to hate another who destroys all the happiness

and goodness in our lives. The inner enemy destroys our resources of happiness in the same way. If we can recognise our inner enemies, we can understand more about the negative consequences they bring to our lives. And naturally, then, we come to the point of wanting to remove them.

Meditation is the means of getting rid of the inner enemy. The benefits are in finding more happiness, peace and relaxation within ourselves. If we think about what is truly important in our lives, then we can see that inner happiness, the sort of peace and happiness we can enjoy mentally, is the most important thing we need. We may enjoy good physical health and we may have great wealth and material possessions, but how often do we enjoy inner peace and happiness? How often do we find a moment when we look inside and say, yes, I am completely satisfied, completely relaxed and happy. These moments are rare. They are rare because we haven't challenged our inner enemy enough with a view to getting rid of it.

Meditation and spiritual practice is all about one's mind. So whenever we practice, we need to focus our attention on the mind. As the most eminent master Atisha said: Out of all instructions, the supreme instruction is watching your own mind. So when we meditate or practise Dharma, then we have to be aware of our own minds, because the aim of our practice is to develop positive qualities in our minds while diminishing the negativities. To be successful in our spiritual practice we have to be able to see the positive qualities that we can develop within our minds and the negativities that we should overcome.

So therefore in our practice, as the master Atisha said, watching the mind is essential. By watching our mind we can see the good qualities that we have, as well as the potential for them to be the source of all the peace and happiness that we love to have in our lives. We can also see the negative destructive energy that serves as a cause for all the suffering and misery that we go through in life. As we said earlier, the main aim of our spiritual practice is to develop our positive qualities in the mind and diminish the harmful negativities within. The positive and negative energies are like two opposing forces. This means that the more positive qualities we develop in our minds through our spiritual practice, then this will, as a natural consequence, diminish the negative force within our mind.

So by developing the positive qualities or energy within

our mind, we can find a moment of peace and happiness in one's mind. By developing positive qualities, our mind becomes calmer, more stable and less influenced by external distractions. Our mind is usually not at rest because it is always busy wandering around following distracting thoughts. And because there is a close relationship between the mind and one's self, when our mind is busy with distracting thoughts, we find ourselves busy, tense and stressed.

It is very important to see the practice of Dharma as directly related to our own minds and actions, rather than being something distant from ourselves. Dharma teachings guide us in which actions to adopt and which actions to abandon. We need to relate this to our minds and our actions, otherwise our learning of the Dharma becomes something unrelated to us and very distant. So we have to always remind ourselves that simply learning Dharma is not enough, because we don't automatically benefit from it. We need to put the Dharma into practise, otherwise it is just dry intellectual knowledge. We can confirm this from real life experience that show us how the Dharma practice works in controlling and calming the mind by developing the more positive qualities and diminishing the negative ones.

It is often said that in following a Dharma practice, we should always observe our minds, our attitudes and our actions; as well as trying to develop more knowledge through this self-observation. If we follow a spiritual practice properly, then we will become physicians for ourselves, recognising any problems or symptoms in our lives, and applying the appropriate Dharma medicine. When it comes down to the practice of the Dharma, then what counts most is, not so much how much knowledge we have of the Dharma, but how much we have achieved in our practice. The most important thing is how much one practises the Dharma.

The immediate benefit of the Dharma is the practice we do. The practice can be as simple as just trying to be mindful of our thoughts and actions and, as much as possible, trying to minimise negativities and increase the positive and beneficial thoughts and actions. It is suggested and recommended that just before going to bed, that we should look back on the day and examine our actions, what has gone well and what has gone wrong. To make spiritual progress weigh up the day's actions on the scale of Dharma teachings. In other words, how many of the day's actions have accorded with the teachings of the Dharma, or even with more worldly positive conventions.

If we are more aware of our minds, our thoughts and actions, then it is possible, through this simple meditation practice, we can bring lasting peace and happiness to our lives. It is mainly the gross forms of thought and gross states of mind in our day to day life that brings disturbance to our minds. For example, the gross mistakes we make in our mental attitude and our physical actions. If we could at least subdue or prevent these things, we will notice a great difference in our lives.

Geshe Doga says that that is all of his opinions that he wants to share with you tonight!

As usual, before we do the dedication prayers, we will chant the Buddha's mantra. Again, just sit in a good relaxing posture with a calm and peaceful state of mind.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

Transcribed from the tapes by Jenny Brooks

Edited by Cynthia Kareena

Edit checked against the tapes by Richard Garward

Edited Version

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