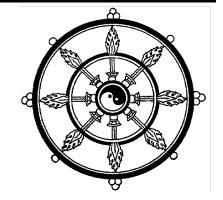
Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons" A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga Translated by Samdup Tsering

७७ ते सिरमक्रमक प्राप्त राया





26 August 1998

First of all we will do some breathing meditation. In meditation it is important to make sure that the body is at rest by choosing a comfortable sitting posture. Also try to overcome all thoughts concerned with outside objects and bring the mind fully inward.

Just before starting the meditation you should generate the intention to make every effort to be sure that your mind is under your control, rather than it being influenced by distracting thoughts. Make sure this motivation is generated before beginning the meditation.

We can talk about the different types of meditation, but essentially meditation teaches how to safeguard one's mind and be more responsible for it. The mind is important in that it is the source of all that we experience in life. So it makes a lot of difference if we enjoy some peace and clarity within our minds. When the mind is not clear, when it is filled with unnecessary thoughts, it obscures the clarity of our thinking. Distracting thoughts in our minds are a source of confusion and problems. We don't normally think that the source of our problems is the mind, but upon investigation we can see that the problems we experience aren't always caused by some external factor. The problems are caused by some sort of delusion or some unwanted thought in the mind. The reason we meditate is to develop some sort of peace and clarity in our minds. Applying meditation in this way will benefit us enormously in life.

We are using the text called 'The Wheel of Sharp Weapons' as the basis of teachings for Wednesday nights. Tonight so we are up to verse 41:

When our mind is untamed though we act with great

This is the wheel of sharp weapons returning Full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. 'Til now we have engaged in those worldly ambitions That aim at success for ourselves in this life; Hereafter let's work with pure one-pointed effort To nourish the wish to gain freedom's far shore.

This verse shows us the reasons for undertaking spiritual practice, as well as the cause of not achieving the aims of our spiritual practice. Generally speaking, the purpose of spiritual practice is to make progress in terms of our conduct- of both mind and body. In order to be motivated to improve our way of thinking and our actions, we have to understand the consequence of our actions to our own lives and to the lives of those we interact with. It is important to pay attention to our own thoughts and actions, investigate, analyse and assess

them. Normally we never think of doing this because we are preoccupied with worldly pursuits, like how to make more money or how to become famous.

To make progress in any spiritual practice, it is essential to focus on ourselves. The first thing we need to understand is that we really are looking for true peace and happiness in our lives, not just some artificial sense of peace. We want to actually feel some sense of peace, contentment and relaxation. But this very much depends upon our own minds and our own actions. So it is important to observe and examine our mind and our actions, recognising anything that needs to be changed, anything within our minds and actions that misleads us in life and brings us suffering. We will then notice how distracting thoughts can prevent us from finding or enjoying peace and happiness in our life.

If we don't want any suffering and problems in our lives, then we need to solve the problems, the cause of which lies within ourselves, just as the cause of peace and happiness also lies within. We can create these causes within our own minds. For example, if we cultivate a good heart, then naturally we will have peace and joy in our minds. But if we hold onto negative states of mind, and so many distracting thoughts, then no matter what we do, we won't find the peace and happiness that we are looking for.

The verse is telling us that sometimes we think we have engaged in some spiritual practice, and while its supposed to improve our quality of life and bring us more peace and happiness, we can often be disappointed. Despite all our efforts, we find that the mind is still not calm and we still have no control over it. Our mind is still overpowered by wild thoughts which we still haven't gotten rid of. In the first few lines of the

When our mind is untamed although we act with great virtue

This is the wheel of sharp weapons returning Full circle upon us from wrongs we have done.

These lines are telling us why we have not achieved results in our practice. Up until now we have either not done enough practice or we just haven't done it with the proper motivation. The practice we have done in this life, as well as in past lives, is tainted with the fault of worldly pursuit, for either material gain or an increase in reputation. But now that we recognise this, we can generate a new, fresh motivation to overcome worldly motives when we meditate or engage in other spiritual

practice. We will now have one aim; to subdue our minds and to transform all our actions from negative to positive.

In contrast to the spiritual way of living, there is the worldly or the mundane way of living. If you have chosen the spiritual way of living, then the way that you think and your daily way of doing things has to be different from those who choose the mundane way of living. In the mundane worldly life judgements about people are made on the basis of material achievements like the amount of wealth amassed, or what sort of position they hold in society, what title they have or how famous they are. So in order to live a successful worldly life, all these things - material gain or good name - all become important. But do these people find satisfaction and peace in their lives? In most cases they don't, because mental peace and satisfaction is not something that material wealth or success can give us.

There is a connection between wealth and happiness: the more desire a person has for wealth, the more unhappiness and dissatisfaction there is in his or her mind. If your mind is not content, then there is no end to seeking more fame, more reputation or a higher position. People who live like this undergo great struggles; they have to put up with feelings of jealousy and unease when others achieve the position or reputation they themselves wanted. When we aren't content with our level of wealth, our reputation or the material objects we own, then we can't have mental peace because there is so much unease and restlessness in our minds.

Even someone who has chosen to follow a spiritual path can go through this type of mental torment if his or her mind is not calm and controlled. For example, some spiritual practitioners spend a lot of time studying and practising in order achieve a good name and reputation. They can feel great suffering and mental torment when they can't achieve the position or the recognition that they seek. When a spiritual practitioner undergoes this sort of jealousy and pride, then they are no different from any worldly person. Even in the eyes of worldly people they are not seen as spiritual practitioners because they are no different to themselves – with the same types of delusions, anger and so forth.

Whatever religion we follow teaches us about overcoming the negative states of mind within us. All spiritual practice is a remedy to some form of negative state of mind or mental delusion. So it is very important that whenever we apply a spiritual practice in our lives, that we make sure it is remedying some delusion within the mind. When people call themselves a follower of a particular religion, they should have some sense of responsibility for protecting their religion, as often people judge a religion based on its followers. So when they see a follower of a religion who is aggressive and behaves in a negative way, then they may criticise or disparage that particular religion, even though it is the follower's fault.

Try to understand that whenever we practise Dharma, that the practice is a remedy to the delusions in our minds. Understand the delusion you wish to remove and understand the spiritual practice that will achieve that. For example, the practice of giving charity to the poor benefits not only those who receive from us but it is a remedy to our own delusion of miserliness. Even if you have wealth, if you are used to giving your possessions to others from the heart, your mind is not bound by that wealth. Being free from miserliness means being free from the problems that our own possessions can bring. Giving our possessions freely gives us some satisfaction when we think back over our lives – 'I gained wealth in this life and was able to help others through this wealth.' When we look back we can say that our practice was a source of joy and mental fulfillment.

Basically we just have to make sure that our spiritual practice doesn't become another material pursuit. It is not just another thing that worldly people would do in their lives.

In the same verse it says 'hereafter let's work with pure one pointed effort to nourish the wish to gain freedoms far ashore'. This should be included in our motivation when we engage in any spiritual practice. There should be no worldly motive, whether it be the pursuit of wealth or reputation. We should be looking at the ultimate view of complete enlightenment, and think that our spiritual practice will achieve this ultimate state of enlightenment to benefit all sentient beings.

So we will finish the teaching here and we will now chant the Buddha's mantra seven times. So, just like before, try to relax your body and mind and use this mantra as an object to focus your mind on.

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

© Tara Institute