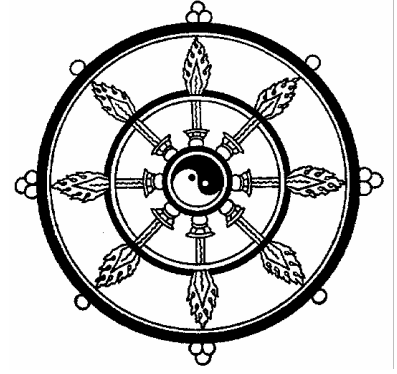


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

ཨོ ལྷོ་ལྷོ་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



2 September 1998

Choose a comfortable sitting posture and try to fully relax your body.

Even if we physically rest, there is not much point to it if the mind is not at rest. Mental peace is the more essential, so we have to learn what stops the mind from resting. One of the main causes of the mind not being at rest is that it wanders. As we sit in this relaxed state, if we check why our minds cannot relax, it is because it wanders here and there, without aim, pondering any object or event. This uncontrolled mind can bring us totally unnecessary suffering; it has this bad habit of always fantasising or dreaming about something we do not possess, something beyond our reach.

Under the influence of this kind of thought, the mind cannot be content with its current situation, though it may be very comfortable and satisfactory. Even if we have such a good situation, we don't think of ourselves as fortunate. One reason why the mind is not content is that it is always thinking of something beyond our reach, spending more and more time pondering the event or object not yet possessed, or not yet within our experience. This shows that we need to do something to bring the mind under control, closer to our own reality. That is the purpose of these short meditations.

By engaging in meditation practice, it is possible to train our minds to become more obedient, more disciplined. The purpose of meditation is to control or calm the mind. So, after choosing the right sitting posture, with a relaxed body, we try to focus on the mind. Try to get rid of any distracting thoughts until the mind dwells within. Once we have brought the mind inward, we can start the actual meditation, which here is the breathing: the object of meditation is the outgoing and incoming breath. As you do not want the mind to wander again to outside objects, you train your mind by trying to focus it on the breath. This simple technique is very effective in developing concentration.

What we should look for in our meditation is quality, rather than quantity, in the sense of the length of the session. Even if it is only for a short time, we should have full awareness of what we are supposed to do, making sure that the mind is focusing on the object. Once we are able to do the meditation for a short time, slowly we can hold it for longer periods and develop more concentration. So we will now do this breathing meditation for a few minutes.

If we regularly practise any meditation that can help put our minds at rest, we will find meditation to be

beneficial. Whenever we engage in meditation practice, we try to make sure that the mind is not occupied with any other activity. We have to draw the mind inward, away from all outer engagement, and try to focus it on the object chosen for that meditation practice. Just as we can find ourselves becoming physically relaxed when we go on holiday, likewise meditation can be a relaxing time for the mind.

In our day to day life- whether or not we have a job, a partner or possessions- the main source of our happy or unhappy experiences is our minds. When the mind is not calm, some people without jobs seem to find even more problems. Even for those with plenty of money, the moment they stop work, many problems can arise, with relationships and other things. This clearly shows that the mind becomes undisciplined when we do not have any specific thing to do. When they have a timetable to follow, whether they like it or not, for some people that is good. As human beings, we all have intelligence, which we can use to understand our own minds. Through that understanding, we can really benefit ourselves. On the other hand, when we do not understand that the cause of certain problems is the untamed mind, this can bring depression, disappointment and low self-esteem.

Even if we have our own family, a husband or wife or partner, we can still feel a strong sense of loneliness and isolation. If we examine the cause of this loneliness, it is because of some unnecessary thought in the mind. Such unnecessary thoughts can make us feel that something vital is missing from our lives, making it very difficult to be content. Some people feel that, without someone to live with, there is no meaning to life; they think that having a partner is indispensable.

Of course, we are not saying there is something wrong with having a partner. However, when somebody has such a strong thought and is faced with this problem of establishing a relationship with another, it is more beneficial for them to try to change their thinking. Why do you need to find someone? Is not having someone going to jeopardise your health? Is it going to jeopardise your wealth? What harm will not having someone cause?

Each of us has to understand his or her mind and know what state of mind is beneficial, useful and constructive, and what type of mind is harmful and destructive. If we identify a thought or state of mind which, whenever it arises, makes us unhappy and makes it hard for us to

concentrate on the other things we must do in life- in such a case, we should understand that it is better to get rid of that thought. If we look into our minds, we will find so many different thoughts, some of which are best forgotten, while others are better to retain.

Of course, the main purpose of meditation is to enhance inner peace and happiness. When external things distract our minds, we cannot experience inner peace and happiness and we become emotionally vulnerable to outside changes. If we face some minor unfavorable conditions, we can easily get disturbed and upset. Further, we make it worse by thinking more negatively about ourselves.

Thus, through excessive worrying, we easily make a minor problem very bad. Then we find it easy to lose our self-control, and easy to break our good disciplined habits, like eating well and exercising. When we are very disturbed, we are not interested in eating normal meals. Rather, it is so easy to go and take up smoking, or take intoxicating drinks or, even worse, drugs. If we continue this for a few more days, not only our state of mind, but also our physical health becomes worse.

Therefore, it is important to understand that everything cannot go in our favour, we cannot always expect good news. We should be ready to endure problems, and try to maintain some inner strength so that at least we will not be so disturbed by the minor misfortunes that befall us. To be able to do this, we have to maintain some calmness in our minds, so that even if we face an adverse situation, with a calm mind we will be able to cope. We can maintain this calmness in the mind, as we said, by controlling the mind and making sure it is not overpowered by distracting thoughts.

That is all the teaching for tonight. Now, we are going to chant the Lord Buddha's mantra seven times. Just as we did before, we will sit in meditation posture. Making sure you are comfortable and feeling relaxed, bring the mind fully inward by removing all distracting thoughts. As we begin the chanting, focus the mind on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

*Transcribed from the tapes by Jenny Brooks
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Edited Version*

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