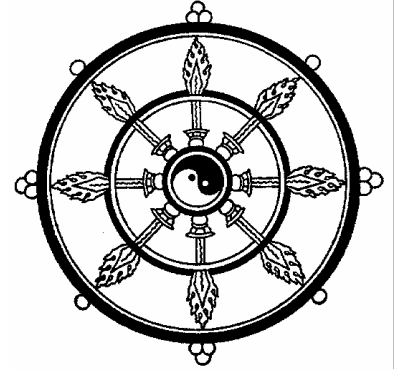


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

འཇིགས་མེད་མཚོ་མ་འཕྲོ་ལོ།



23 September 1998

As usual, first we will do some breathing meditation together. Find a most comfortable posture, relaxing your body.

If at the same time the mind is resting, we will truly feel at rest. What prevents our minds from resting are the various objects, pleasant or unpleasant, that we hold in the mind. When we have all these different objects in the mind, it gets disturbed and cannot rest. When wandering thoughts influence the mind, it is not under our control. Rather, it is all over the place, its energy, scattered.

To put the mind into rest, what we should do first is to try and gradually remove all distracting thoughts, letting it dwell within. After this, direct one's mental attention so that the mind becomes one with the breath, and try to have single-pointed concentration on the breath. If the mind is calmer and more peaceful, it is of great benefit to us, so it is worthwhile trying to do something at least on a daily basis to achieve calmness of the mind.

In learning about this meditation, we see that there is some emphasis on pacifying our thoughts. This doesn't mean we should have a completely blank mind, with no thoughts about the things that concern us. We know that our minds can lack motivation to do things and can lack initiative; if we look into it, there are some types of mind that lead us to do nothing.

Obviously, if we enjoy having a stable and joyful mind, whatever activity we undertake we can do with more concentration, effort and enthusiasm, making our actions more productive. Whereas if we lack motivation, right from the beginning we either won't do anything or, if we do, we can't focus or concentrate. As a result, it becomes harder for us to accomplish anything in the work we undertake. If, however, we do this very simple but effective breathing meditation, we can develop our concentration up to a period of, say, 15 to 20 minutes. We can then utilise this same ability to concentrate in whatever work we undertake. Obviously, we will take more delight in our work because the mind is fully motivated to do it, it is fully there with our actions. But if other things always distract our minds, it is hard for us to generate any enthusiasm for whatever action we undertake.

In learning about meditation practice or the spiritual teachings, we are learning about something that can be applied to improving our whole life. Meditation is not just confined to a short period of time of sitting in a formal posture. When we practice a spiritual teaching or meditation, it can bring us more peace and happiness.

However, we should not only enjoy this peace and happiness when we sit in a formal posture, and then when we are not in a formal posture, lose that peace and happiness in our minds.

It is important to learn how to relate the practice we do in a quiet time to our busy daily life. Living a busy life is unavoidable if we do not want to live apart from society. As we have to interact socially, at work or at home, it is important to know the best way of interacting with others. First, we have to learn about meditation practice and what is involved, and how the practice benefits us. For example, in this simple breathing meditation, we are taught to place the mind on the breath and to cut it off from all other objects. The reason we have to cut our minds off from other objects is that this can help us to stop afflictive emotions – like desire, anger, pride and jealousy – from arising. Thus we experience some inner peace and happiness in our meditation time because the mind is not influenced by any afflictive emotions, and is focused on a neutral object that does not stimulate desire or hatred, and so forth.

We should use this same technique in our every day life, such as in our work. As in the meditation practice, if we could focus our minds on our work, we would find ourselves performing our work much better, and feeling a greater sense of achievement. When the mind is focused on our work, there is no room for thoughts that arouse attachment, jealousy, pride or competitiveness with regard to our fellow workers. If, instead of focusing on our work, the mind is influenced by afflictive emotions like desire, hatred and jealousy, the work place can bring us a lot of suffering, making our work harder. So it is important to understand the benefit and application of meditation to our lives – it has the potential to bring peace and happiness in our minds continuously, throughout our lifetime.

We have to learn to practise meditation in all our actions, whether sleeping, working, sitting or standing. If we practice meditation when we sleep, our sleep can be very relaxing. We want to go to sleep with a joyful, calm mind and wake up with the same calm and joyful mind. Of course, we always want a clear mind, so meditation can not only enhance peace and happiness in the mind, it can also help improve our physical well-being at the same time.

We might go over the teaching on a verse from the text, but before we do that, do any of you have a question?

Q: You have your formal meditation in the morning and at

night but during the day should you do some informal meditation, like when you are waiting for the bus and times like that. Is that what Geshe-la is saying?

Of course, disciplining the mind is more important than physical discipline. Meditation is about gaining some knowledge of the mind, so when we say we should apply meditation practice all the time, we are talking about continuously applying the knowledge of the mind that we gain from the meditation.

We cannot stay in the physical meditation posture we use in formal meditation all the time because we have to do many other things every day, like cooking. Even if we don't consider our work, we can consider how much physical work we have to do at home. Just as in our formal meditation practice, the main focus should be ensuring that the mind is not influenced by any afflictive emotion like desire, hatred or jealousy. Even when we are not formally engaged in meditation practice, we must still remember to safeguard our minds.

Say that you are working in a group of four. One person may be more knowledgeable than you, while another may be less knowledgeable, and another may be equal to you. It is important that you adopt the right mental attitude towards all of them, showing no jealousy towards the one who is more knowledgeable than you, no pride towards the one who is less knowledgeable, and no competitiveness towards those equal to you.

When you adopt this kind of attitude, all your fellow workers will admire and like you. Those in a higher position would be more likely to like you, and pass on their knowledge to you, if you respect them and show no jealousy. But if you had a jealous mind, you could not work happily with that person. Likewise, if you had a proud or arrogant mind, this would bring conflict with others. Therefore, we have to remember to relate the essence of meditation practice to the work situation.

The essence of meditation practice is safeguarding the mind; the outcome of meditation should be diminishing the afflictive emotions. Even if you are in a crowd where you may hear all sorts of things from other people, if you remain like you do in meditation – aware of your mind, safeguarding it from the influence of afflictive emotions – you can remain with that full awareness of your mind, and make sure nothing stimulates any afflictive emotion. Even if you hear something from others that arouses anger or hatred, at least if you are aware that you are feeling hatred or anger, and that it could explode into something destructive and negative, you could try to safeguard your mind, which is what meditation is about.

We will leave the teaching here, and chant the Buddha's mantra seven times. If you could again sit in a relaxed meditation posture and calm the mind inward and, as we chant it, place your mental focus on the mantra.

Transcribed from the tapes by Jenny Brooks
Edited by Cynthia Kareena
Edit checked against the tapes by Richard Garward
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA
