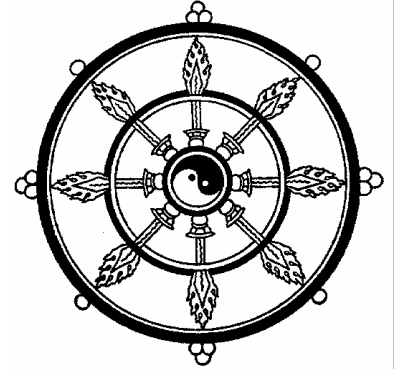


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

ཨོ ལྷོ་སྐྱུང་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



7 October 1998

As usual we begin with a short breathing meditation. Please make yourself comfortable in a sitting position and relax your mind and body. As the famous master Atisha said - while alone check your mind and while with others or with a crowd check your speech. This advice is very true because often when we are alone and we stop doing things, we have a quiet time to ourselves. This is when our mind usually keeps itself busy with many thoughts, ideas and dreams. If the mind isn't calm then we aren't at peace and we cannot rest ourselves. So we should check our minds and make sure that we are physically resting as well as finding some mental rest.

With regards to the latter part of Atisha's advice, we need to check our speech with other people, otherwise we could easily make patronising or conflicting statements. Master Atisha also said that the supreme practice is controlling the mind. Without this practice, any other practice is not very meaningful in terms of bringing true peace and happiness within ourselves. The peace and happiness we seek is not just a physical thing, it is mental peace and happiness. So on top of resting physically we have to remember to rest our minds by turning off all its thoughts. Without stopping this continuous thought process, then it is very hard to put our minds into a state of rest.

We have to discipline the mind in order to put it in a state of rest. If we don't control our minds then all the usual objects will stay in our minds, whether they are attractive or unattractive objects. There are all sorts of objects that appear to be beautiful or ugly to our minds. This is then the start of the mind using these objects to create an unending thought process. If the object is beautiful, then the mind has a thought that desires the object, then it starts to think about how to get that object, eventually causing mental stress and frustration.

We experience things inwardly, even if we are resting ourselves physically. Emotionally we can experience a great deal of discomfort and mental disturbance. The causes of this can be traced back to not controlling our thoughts and these uncontrolled thoughts are a real obstacle to experiencing some peace and happiness. The moment we can put aside these disturbing thoughts, in the same way that we can physically relax, then somehow we can experience inner peace and happiness.

Keeping the above points in mind, engage in meditation practice, making sure that both the mind and body are at rest. To rest the mind we rid ourselves of busy thoughts and bring the mind inward. Try not to have an image

appear in the mind, whether beautiful or not, and just let the mind fully rest within. Then start the breathing meditation. Focus on the outgoing and incoming breath without being distracted by any other object.

This practice of meditation by calming and controlling the mind is very effective in bringing more peace and happiness into our lives. When we are used to such a meditation to find peace and happiness then we don't have to rely upon outer conditions or friends or other people. Even if we are all by ourselves we can still be in a state of peace and happiness.

By studying the spiritual teachings we will come to realise that these teachings are beneficial in our everyday lives. Spiritual teachings can show us how we can improve the qualities of our life and our actions by cultivating a more positive state of mind. We can do this by transforming our way of thinking. By practising what we study, we can calm our minds down and receive some true benefits from the practice. Even if others criticise the teachings and put them down as just irrelevant superstitious beliefs, this won't affect our belief as we realise that the spiritual teachings are relevant to our lives and without them there is no other way of finding a lasting, stable peace and happiness. Practising the teachings is a means of solving many problems in our lives, like the suffering that many people go through because of loneliness or having no friends.

This peace and happiness comes from within ourselves and is not dependent upon the outside world. Suppose that we say that lasting peace and happiness is dependent upon outer conditions. Then there would be no reason for not finding peace and happiness when we find those outside conditions. And therefore people who suffer because they have no friends wouldn't suffer once they found some friends. But we know this to be untrue. Once the friends are found, the problem still is not solved. Even though some good external conditions can be advantageous in life, true peace and happiness is within our own minds. Once we have both physical and mental peace, then we will be satisfied and feel as if we are surrounded by good conditions.

What we have just discussed is a crucial subject of the spiritual teaching. The purpose of the meditation practice is to bring us benefit. If we give more thought to this subject and then try to understand what is this all about, then we will find the teachings very beneficial. And now Geshe Doga is wondering if anyone has a question to ask.

Q: If when we meditate we focus inside – what is the inside we are focusing on?

A: Suppose we are engaged in a meditation where we are visualising Chenrezig, the deity of compassion, where we have to develop concentration and clarity, then this is said to be an inward object of focus. The mental image we have to focus on is inward, not outside.

But if your question has to do with the preparation just before starting the actual meditation practice, then we do have to overcome all external thoughts and settle the mind inward. If your question is to do with what object the mind focuses on while it is turned inward, then there is no specific object. All our mind experiences, at this point, is some sort of peace and tranquility within. Bringing the mind inward and letting it stay there just means feeling and sustaining that peaceful, tranquil environment that we have created within ourselves. We are not used to sustaining this sort of peaceful environment in our minds, we are more used to our minds going outward. We need to remain in this inward state for a short time rather than just letting the mind be distracted by various objects. Then we direct the mind to a given object. If we are doing a breathing meditation, then the object is our breath. This is training the mind.

Q: Sometimes I find that when I focus within it increases the sense of the non-existent I – the ‘I’ sitting there in peaceful meditation. What is the ‘I’ that we focus on?

Samdup: So are you saying that when say you do the breathing meditation you feel a stronger sense of ego?

A: Something like that

Geshe Doga: In our case the ego in fact always accompanies us, always comes to us, even when we are sleeping and having a dream. Even in our dream state the ego comes, so if we do meditation practice, as you are saying, the ego will still come.

While doing meditation practice then suddenly sometimes our mind goes to some other object, usually some desirable object. Then we would start to think that we need the object. This is like the ‘I’, the ego-centric mind arising and placing an order. It is then likely that we will get out of the meditation and go looking for the object! So the only way to make progress is to try to confront this ego and then try to challenge it by seeing it as an enemy. As part of our practice we sometimes need to say to the ego “You had better listen to me”!

In fact if we are more aware of this ‘I’ then we can be more encouraged to control it because we will understand that, most of the time, this ‘I’ has wanted us to do things that, if we check, we can’t even achieve or fulfill. On the other hand, this ‘I’ rarely encourages us to engage in those things which we can achieve or realize.

Once somebody asked Geshe Doga why he always advises people to keep working, because this person couldn’t find much work. Geshe Doga asked what this person wanted from life. It turned out that this person wanted all of the things that most people want. So Geshe Doga pointed out that there seemed to be some discrepancy between what that person wished for and what they wanted to do. So if you have too many desires

you will have to work harder. Unless you can say that you have no desire for anything, then you can’t say that you don’t want to work. It is very hard to help a person who lacks interest in working because even if you advise the person not to work, but to sleep, then he or she might find the sleeping is as hard as going to work!

We finish tonight’s teaching here and as usual we will chant the Buddha’s mantra seven times. As we begin the chant we need to try to relax our bodies and calm our minds, and use the sound of the mantra as the object to focus on.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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