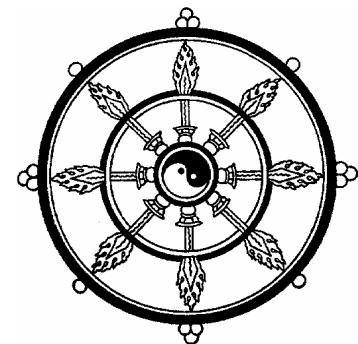


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsiring



17 February 1999

First of all we shall do a breathing meditation together.

Generally speaking object and method of meditation is that it is a means of training your mind in order for it to become very acquainted with any given object. Regarding the choice of object, it is said that generally, any object you wish to use is acceptable, as long as it is not the cause of stimulating disturbing thoughts, or some other undesirable emotion. Rather it should be some neutral object that calms your mind down and settles it with an inward focus.

If we go further, the actual the meditation object is 'out there', it is a visible outer form that you have chosen. It is said that when you meditate, the actual object is some kind of generic image of that object which is created in your mind. Of course, in order to recognise that object clearly, it is said that depending on the object you choose, in the initial stage you can have an object that you have to initially learn about, by for instance receiving teachings from others, or reading books. Whereas there are other objects that can be as simple as a form.

If it is a form, you first of all have to recognise that object clearly in your mind. You may look at the object very closely and thoroughly, so that you get a clear idea of its look, colour, shape and features. Once you have done that, then when you think of this object in your mind, you can have some base, an outer external experience of the object. Mentally you have some sort of generic image of that object.

So it is said that if you use this object, then when you meditate on that object you focus and concentrate on it, not allowing your mind to be distracted by any other object or influenced by any other thought. In this way you try to mentally build a familiarity with that object. Meditation is the process of familiarising the mind with the object over and over again. However, here the object that we are using is our own in-breath and out-breath.

Meditation also involves some physical discipline as well, choosing a meditation posture that not only looks good, but also makes you feel very relaxed.

Of course, the main purpose of meditation is not to just physically find us some peaceful time. It is mainly to find mental peace and happiness. Therefore, as we do our meditation practice, we must have some knowledge about our own mind. When the mind is very unsettled, unhappy or disturbed, we need to find the causes of that. The main cause is that some uncontrolled thought process overpowers our mind. If we observe the mind when this happens, it seems as if some external force

controls the mind, and that overcoming that force is impossible.

However, if we consider the fundamental nature and characteristic of the mind, we can see that it is clear and luminous. That is not what we normally experience. Rather than being clear, the mind is usually very confused, disturbed and unsettled.

The fundamental nature of mind is the same as the [defining] characteristic of other objects. What is the characteristic of water for instance? It is wet and of the nature of moisture. Regardless of whether water comes into contact with other chemicals, or becomes hot or cold, its nature remains the same - it is wet and has the nature of moisture. It is important to realise that the confused, disturbed ignorant mind that we experience now is only a temporary experience. We experience it only because of immediate conditions, which are the conceptualised thoughts that arise from and which are stimulated by for instance various outer conditions.

Why we are mentioning this is because we have to feel positive about the fact that we can change our mind -even our habitual pattern of thinking - through engaging in a meditation practice [such as this one]. Then we can even develop more inner stability and inner peace in our mind.

We have to feel positive and quite confident that the meditation practice we do will work, and that it is an effective way of achieving the goal that we all desire. The goal that which is very good for everyone to have, whether or not you are spiritual practitioners, is a stable and clear mind.

If the mind is not stable and is overpowered by uncontrolled thoughts, then the spiritual practice that you do will be very hard work because you cannot direct your whole mental attention onto the practice. Then because you cannot achieve anything, you get very frustrated.

It is beneficial for everyone to always enjoy some sort of inner stability and lasting peace within the mind. When we enjoy this, then we find that whatever we do in our life will be easier and more enjoyable, and therefore more productive. The converse is that everything becomes very difficult and frustrating when our mind is very emotionally unsettled and we are disturbed by something. In order to generate more determination in your practice, it is important to have this basic knowledge.

Another way of explaining meditation is that it is the practice whereby we gain more true knowledge, and through this knowledge, we are able to try to change our mental attitude. That is, instead of holding the bad old negative mental attitudes and ways of thinking you cultivate a different type of mental attitude. It is important to focus on our mind and if necessary try to make some effort to change, because mental happiness or unhappiness is a direct outcome of our state of mind.

Anger can be a source of unhappiness for our friends and us. Just like anger, we can relate the cause of any experience of mental unhappiness to some state of mind within us. We have to realise that we are doing this meditation practice to overcome those causal problems. The causes are something internal. Just as we may see many external threats to our happiness or our personal safety, likewise there is also an internal cause of unhappiness and suffering. So it is important to overcome that, and meditation is a means to do just that. When we follow meditation practice, we don't have to outwardly change the type of clothes we wear, or our culture - there is no need for such things. What we are doing is change ourself within, in order to overcome all our internal sources of unhappiness, and the unhappiness we cause to other people.

We may ask ourselves how we can overcome or rid ourselves of anger, simply by focusing on our own mind and trying to change it? Is it possible to change it? Is it possible to replace this anger with loving-kindness? We should always question the mental attitude we adopt in our life, asking whether our attitude mainly caused by outer conditions, or whether causes are to be found within ourself? The answer is that causes are within ourselves. That is why we are saying that meditation is effective in changing our mental attitude.

The evidence that the main causes are inside can be seen in the different attitudes we show to other people. Our attitude is so changeable. One day our attitude towards a particular person is very friendly, and the next day it is hatred. We even do this with our own relatives. What are the main conditions responsible for this continual change in our mental attitude? It is our own way of thinking about the person.

For the sake of this argument, with anger there is usually a problem towards some other person. If we trace the cause of this anger, we began to think of that person in a very negative way sometime in the past. Then this thought slowly increased, and as we continued with more such negative ways of thinking we generated strong anger as time passed. The person began to appear to us as a real enemy.

In meditation practice, therefore, we are trying to see our relationship with that person in a very positive way - to see them as another human being. Just like you they are hurt when you say something bad, or when you cause problems. Likewise, they appreciate it when you give support, or show some care and friendship. If you just think of how on this level that there is this common bond between you in that that you both desire happiness and do not want any suffering. You can try to understand that

the other person has exactly the same feelings as yourself. As said before, meditation practice is a means to change our mental attitude.

If we think like this, then it is possible that as we develop more understanding of the true causes and sources of your own unending problems, then you will realise that the main cause is not external. In the case of anger, for example, if the true cause was external, then why do we get angry so quickly? If the true cause was external, then we would have to conclude that if we killed the person with whom we were angry, then that should be the end of our anger. However that is not the case!

The true means of destroying your anger is not destroying the other person. Rather it is to change or transform your own mind. As we develop a more positive mind through meditation practice, and develop more love and compassion, then instead of anger, for example, it is possible that there will be no trace of any anger left in our mind, and we shall also feel close to all other beings. Feeling close to other beings is a very pleasant feeling. Just as through meditation practice we can overcome anger, so too we can overcome the problem of jealousy, unfulfilled desire, and so on.

Now, we'll just spend a few minutes doing a breathing meditation. Make sure you are comfortable with your sitting posture, and that your body is fully relaxed. Try to get rid of all distracting thoughts so that your mind is fully settled inwards. Having done this, we do a breathing meditation, wherein we aim to develop single-pointed concentration on the incoming and outgoing breath, without letting any other thought distract this concentration.

(Pause for meditation period.)

Now we are going to chant the Lord Buddha's mantra seven times. We still try to continue holding our mental concentration. The only difference is that here while we chant it, we use the sound of the mantra as the focusing object of our mind.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

*Transcribed from the tapes by Mary-Lou Considine
Edited by Adair Bennett
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