

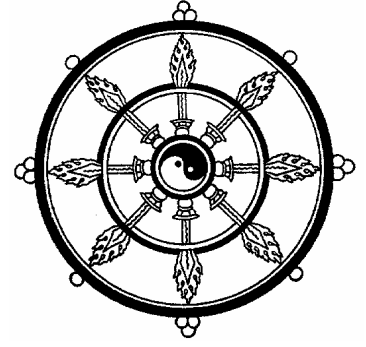
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# Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

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We should first do a few minutes breathing meditation. Try to relax yourself and sit in a comfortable meditation posture, without getting distracted by other thoughts. Just focus the mind on the inhaling and exhaling of the breath.

The reason we should give ourselves some time to practise meditation is that it's very effective for relaxing the mind. We cannot find peace or happiness if our life is always busy. If we live a busy life we can become very stressed, and cannot find any real happiness or joy. On the other hand, if, through practising meditation, we could slow down our lifestyle, it would bring rest to ourselves and to the mind, enabling us to find some time for peace and happiness.

There are many different types of meditation and meditation objects to choose from. You can do this breathing meditation practice, or you can choose to do some other simple meditation - like thinking of a light at your heart or at the level of your navel, and trying to focus the mind on this light. This can also be effective in bringing rest to the mind.

The benefit of practising meditation is that it produces a discriminating understanding about how the mind operates. To understand the mind, we must observe it - that is what meditation practice is all about. In our day-to-day life, there is a lot of unnecessary stress, tension or anxiety, which can be a source of problems. Much of this results from leaving our mind or thoughts unchecked. Clearly, when we understand the mind, we are educating ourselves about it.

If we examine the mind with discriminating wisdom, we can see that the mind exists in two states - one is beneficial, and the other is harmful or destructive. The advantage of meditation practice is that we can recognise the potential of these two sides of our mind. To get rid of the harmful state of mind, we have to recognise it as being negative and harmful.

Once we have gained some discriminating wisdom about the way the mind operates, we can sustain and cultivate mindfulness of what we have found using our wisdom. Mindfulness is not something we should only have when we engage in meditation practice. It is something we should try to have all the time, because we have to be responsible for our actions of body, speech and mind. So, as well as knowing that our deeds are of two types - those that are worthwhile and those that are not - we also have to develop ourselves into better persons. The best way of doing this is maintaining

mindfulness of what we have learned through our wisdom.

We use our mindfulness to be aware of the two types of actions (beneficial/not beneficial) of body, speech and mind. With mindfulness, we try to create beneficial actions. As for actions that are not beneficial, we have to continuously remind ourselves that the outcome or result will harm us. We should even consider the thoughts we continuously generate in the mind. With mindfulness, we can see that we harbour many harmful thoughts, and that these thoughts serve as a source of problems and tension in the mind.

When we engage in meditation practice, we are imposing some kind of discipline or control on the mind. Through meditation practice, as said before, we can learn more about the mind. Using this knowledge of the mind, we try to train it. If we recognise, through our knowledge of the mind, that certain types of thoughts cause problems, we have to do something based on this understanding.

Geshe Doga said that the other day, a teenager about 16 or 17 years old asked him for advice, because the teenager had had difficulty going to sleep. So Geshe Doga advised him that if he could not go to sleep because of some type of thought in his mind, he had to understand this as the cause of not going to sleep - regardless of whether he saw the thought as positive or negative, or bad or good, he had had to completely forget about that thought. By doing some kind of meditation practice, he could try to learn how to stop that thought.

If we don't examine our mind much, but rather just habitually respond to what our mind tells us, it might tell us something like 'better just to do nothing' or 'just pass the time with laziness'. Without examining the mind, it's easy to think that if we follow that instinct, it is more beneficial, more worthwhile. On the other hand, we may see undertaking study or work as being a hardship. It is important that we use our discriminating wisdom to see the effect of the actions we are about to undertake, not only in the immediate time-frame but also in the long term.

When we think properly, fully utilising our knowledge, we can use reason to correct our way of thinking and decision-making. If we could gain more true wisdom, whatever actions we did or decisions we made would be more effective; whereas, without discriminating wisdom, we can mislead ourselves.

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If you are in a position in which you have to advise or teach others, either parents or children, or you are a spiritual teacher, it is important that you not just state what is right, but rather focus on why it is right. This is more effective if it is based on your own experience. The more you understand the value of education, the more effectively you can explain to children why their education is important, why they should study and not waste time. You also need to do this in a skilful way, so that if the message is absorbed by the children's minds, you don't have to tell them to study - it becomes automatic.

Otherwise, without getting the message across clearly, you can say the right thing but the children feel that you are nagging them, and when they get sick of that, they will run away from home! Therefore, it is important in teaching about both spiritual and worldly matters that you try to explain things based on your own experience. Also, if your listeners are in a disturbed frame of mind, there is no point in doing anything; even if you tell them something, it might defeat the purpose and have some bad effect on them.

We are focusing here on the importance of the very first step in meditation practice - trying to make an effort to learn as much as possible about one's own mind. We have to try to gain a true understanding of how the actions of our body, speech and mind can be positive or negative. Obviously, if one's own frame of mind is not the right one, whatever actions one tries to undertake, even giving some advice to others, is not very effective. On the other hand, if you possess a frame of mind that is peaceful and calm and has love and compassion, if you have this kind of soft and gentle mind, whatever actions you do will benefit yourself and others.

We are nearly out of time. However, we will do a few lines from this text, *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*. We are up to verse 52, which reads:

Frantically running through life's tangled jungle,  
We are chased by sharp weapons of wrongs we have done  
Returning upon us; we are out of control.

We have learned from the preceding verse that the mind that cherishes other beings, and that abandons selfish needs is like the king of the mantras, and is the most powerful one. This verse shows that why that mind of cherishing other beings is so powerful, why it is called the king of the mantras, is because it destroys the two harmful enemies. The first of these is our self-cherishing mind, which is the mind that holds or cherishes the 'I' or the ego or the self. The second enemy is called self-grasping, which is the wrong view of holding or believing that I or that self to be inherently existing.

These two enemies of the self-cherishing mind and of self-grasping are like our boss and we are like their servant. These two enemies have total control over us. The verse says, we are 'frantically running through life's tangled jungle' - because we are totally controlled by these two enemies. Our life is like a tangled jungle, in which there is no way for us to find happiness, but only

to find suffering, wherever we move. We know from our own experience that even if we move from one place to another, from east to west or west to east, there is no escape or freedom from suffering. This shows the magnitude of the harm caused by these two enemies. On the other hand, it shows the power of the mind that cherishes other beings - this can fully subdue these enemies.

We will leave the teaching here, and we are going to chant the Buddha's mantra seven times. As at the beginning of the session, could everyone relax the body and try to bring the mind inward by removing all outgoing thoughts. Having done this, begin the chanting and make sure that the chanting is the mind's only object.

TAYATHA OM MUNIMUNIMAHA MUNAYE SOHA

*Transcribed from the tapes by Di Johns  
Edited by Mary-Lou Considine  
Edited Version*

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