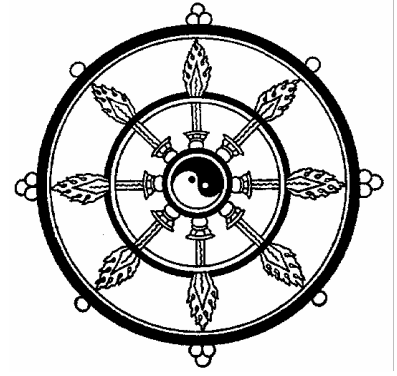


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

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5 May 1999

We'll do a few minutes breathing meditation first. Please choose a comfortable sitting posture, making sure that your body is fully relaxed. Then try to get rid of all distracting thoughts, bringing the mind fully inward and resting it.

After we have brought the mind inward, we can start the breathing meditation, in which we should try to concentrate on the in- and out-breath. The inhalation and exhalation should be natural and even. During the meditation, you should focus on the breath as if you were mentally counting it coming in and going out.

The benefit of meditation practice is that we can understand more about our mind, our self, and the cause and effect of our actions. We can achieve more self-control and see things more clearly. The focus of our meditation is on the mind, and on training the mind, so that we will have a more positive and constructive attitude. It is important to understand more about the mind and to develop a positive attitude, as our attitude predetermines our actions and how we appear to others.

People who have a good nature, who are admired by many others, are those who have a good heart. They generally have a more positive state of mind. On the contrary, when we have a negative state of mind, it can destroy everything, including our friendships and relationships. A negative mind can also cause us to experience depression and confusion. So it is beneficial sometimes to examine the stream of thoughts in the mind. Then we can recognise feelings of confusion - the times when we cannot think properly and the mind appears to be clouded and restless.

If we examine the mind, we can begin to recognise how negative states of mind are the source of all dissatisfaction. The benefit of meditation practice is that we can get rid of these states of mind, which prevent us from apprehending things clearly. These negative states of mind are like a veil, obscuring the true nature of the mind. Meditation removes obscurations from the mind, allowing it to manifest its true nature. This brings inner peace and happiness.

There are many different meditations for training the mind. Each one has a specific benefit. For instance, if we observe our entire body, including the internal parts, we will find that it is just filled with filth. This meditation has the specific effect of overcoming desire or attachment to the human body.

The mind is the most influential force in our life. While

all of our outer actions depend on our speech and bodily movements, what controls the body's actions is the mind. In worldly terms, we can categorise negative, unskillful, unfair or bad actions as coming from negative states of mind, and positive actions as coming from positive states of mind. In spiritual terms, we refer to these actions as positive karma or negative karma, as black or white karma. The important idea here is that the root cause of all these actions is our mind. Often, when something goes wrong, we blame something or someone else, some external cause, never considering that the root cause is within our mind. We never think of preventing or solving the problem by understanding and dealing with the root cause.

Our mind not only controls our actions, but who we are as a person. When we understand that there is a certain kind of mind controlling us, when we understand what we can and cannot do, it gives us the opportunity to achieve our goals. Sometimes, when we feel frustrated, hopeless or depressed, we may say that we could not possibly achieve a certain goal. In a sense, we are undermining our potential, limiting ourselves and underestimating our capacity.

The reason we feel this way is not necessarily to do with not having enough energy or capacity, but it is because of a certain state of mind. The mind predetermines our actions and feelings. Therefore, if we could understand this mind, and through this understanding develop a more positive state of mind, we would have more positive experiences, and do more positive actions.

As a small but effective practice, every day when we first get up, we should try and check the mind, starting the day with a positive state of mind. After doing this if, during the day, something starts disturbing the mind, we can make a conscious effort to get rid of the disturbance, because we have resolved not to live our day like that. We can try to replace that mind with a positive state of mind, perhaps generating the thought that, throughout the day, we will do our best to be friendlier, more caring, and more understanding towards others.

Because of the positive energy that we generate in the mind, we can influence our whole day's actions to be positive. When we get up in the morning, if we do not take into account how the mind can be disturbed and unhappy, it will influence that whole day and the day after that. It is important to see the benefit, in all areas of our lives, of controlling the mind and making an effort to develop a positive state of mind.

During the times when we feel hopeless or depressed, we may feel that there is no way we will ever be happy. We feel like this is because of a certain type of restless thought - the thought that we have no reason to be happy. As long as we have this thought, it is like being imprisoned by our own misery.

We can use meditation to get rid of this thought, or at least to replace this thought with another one. Even if it seems that there is no other remedy, you can feel confident about using meditation to get rid of this type of problem. In such a circumstance, if you know about meditation practice, it is important to apply that knowledge. Through your practice, as you get rid of the negative thought, you will become a different person. Meditation helps you not to have to live with thoughts that bring unhappiness.

When we engage in meditation practice, it is more important to try to get rid of mental distractions than to meditate for long periods. An effective meditation practice could be as short as 15 minutes. The aim is to make sure that your mind is not distracted by different objects, but rather is focused on the meditation object.

The difference is that, before you practise meditation, you feel unhappy and incapable of feeling happy. However, after practising meditation, you can see things differently. You have more courage and hope because you know that no matter how badly you may feel, by practising the meditation you can change your emotions and feelings completely. If you put meditation into practice, you can feel more positive and optimistic about your life.

We will leave the teaching here. As usual, we are going to chant the Buddha's mantra together. As before, sit in a meditation posture and relax, and making sure that there are no distractions in the mind and that it is focused on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

*Transcribed from the tapes by Rita Feldmann
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Edited Version*

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