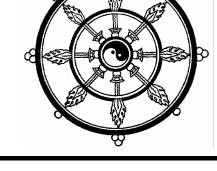
Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons" A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga Translated by Samdup Tsering

७७ तें हें र मर्केन क परिया







First, we will do a few minutes breathing meditation. So please choose the sitting posture that you find most convenient and relaxing physically.

We should also understand the tremendous benefit of resting the mind. If the mind and body rest at the same time, we can feel a true sense of rest and relaxation. So, after we rest the body, we should also try to create the causes to bring about rest in the mind.

Our usual understanding of resting the body is to physically stop activity, to do nothing. But what do we mean by mental peace? This is what we try to achieve in meditation practice. Mental peace is not just a matter of stopping all thought processes as we do when we faint! Rather, mental peace occurs when the mind is resting within, and at the same time has clarity. With peace and clarity, our thinking is better and we can develop some wisdom knowledge. Thus, we should try to appreciate the benefit of meditation practice in bringing more wisdom, peace, and knowledge to the mind.

We should also try to understand that, through meditation, we are training and learning about the mind. If our mind is not properly disciplined and trained, we can be easily distracted by various outer objects. Thus, the mind cannot rest because it is always under the influence of outer objects. Due to this, we lack inner peace and stability. This, in turn, affects our power to think clearly and our attitude. Try to see that we do meditation practice to train the mind so that it can stabilise within, and so that we can have better concentration and a clearer sense of discrimination.

We will now begin the breathing meditation by getting rid of all outgoing thoughts. Let the mind stabilise within. Having done this, begin the breathing meditation by directing the mental focus on the incoming and outgoing breath.

I am going to quote verse 56 from the text, *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*:

We are drawn to the sufferings of miserable rebirths, Yet mindless of pain, we go after its cause. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head Of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centred butcher Who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

This verse concerns all the activities we do over an entire lifetime. These activities can be understood using the analogy of a single day, in the sense that our life can be compared to the 24-hour cycle, beginning with daytime and finishing with night. The type of actions we do over a day reflect the actions we do over our whole life, and can be summarised into two - thought and deed.

In meditation practice, it is important is to investigate the causes and the effects of our actions. These, not material conditions, are the true source of our happiness and suffering. Positive actions result in happiness, whereas negative actions result in suffering. Even if we enjoy beautiful living conditions, it doesn't necessarily mean we will have more happiness and fewer problems.

Someone may be rich and enjoy very good material conditions. However, if they are irresponsible and create negative mental actions with respect to others, they will undergo suffering. Further, their actions will cause suffering to others, even those who are very close to them. When we actually reflect upon the results of positive or negative actions, it becomes clear to us that we do not want negative actions, nor would anyone else want to see us performing such negative actions.

Of these two - mental and physical actions - focusing on mental actions is more important and effective, because our physical actions are derived from our thoughts. It is also important to realise the causal link between our thoughts and outer deeds. The reason our physical actions turn out to be destructive and harmful to others is because they are preceded by a negative state of mind, which drives us to do those actions.

One aim of meditation is to see the connection between our physical actions and our mind. Then we can understand that our mind is the source of all our experiences of happiness and suffering. Thus meditation practice leads us to explore the mind, investigate its nature, and see how it can influence us to undertake positive actions that truly benefit our lives and the lives of others.

Likewise, we need to recognise which states of mind have a negative influence, motivating us to undertake harmful actions. When we talk about the mind as a source of happiness or suffering, we need to refer to both states of mind - positive and negative.

It is important to recognise positive states of mind. We often say that the mind of loving kindness and compassion is a positive mental attitude. We must understand the difference that cultivating such a state of mind will make to our actions. It is important to see that

all the actions we undertake through love and compassion are beneficial. Apart from this, having a mind of love and compassion is a peaceful and gentle experience – it is not something that brings unease or disturbance to the mind. So all the actions we do out of such a mind are very beneficial and positive, even in the eyes of others.

On the other hand, if we cultivate states of mind such as desirous attachment, anger or resentment, they bring disturbance and distraction instead of peace. Through such states of mind, the actions we perform can be harmful and unpleasant. The essential practice of meditation or Dharma is mind training - transforming negative states of mind into positive ones. The aim of this training is to break negative habits of the mind, because if we do not, we cannot eliminate and reduce negative actions.

As said before, the mind is the cause of experiencing sufferings or problems. Outwardly, we may blame a different cause or condition. For instance, when we experience conflict in our relationships with others, if we really investigate it, the cause is really conflict in one's own mind or in the mind of the other person.

So to resolve the problem, we need to resolve the conflict in our own mind. This may be a belief that we hold to be right. In the mind of the other person, however, it is not right. Even if it is just one thought, the solution to the problem is getting rid of that thought. If we do not change our mind and resolve it, it will cause us immeasurable problems, even if we don't want to cause problems to ourselves or to the other person.

This one thought that we hold in our mind can motivate us to speak harshly to others, and completely disregard their views. The way to resolve such conflicts in relationships is finding a time to discuss your differences with the right mental attitude. Suppose, on the other hand, you have your mind fixed on not giving up your viewpoint; likewise, the other person will hold on to their view, and there will be no discussion.

If we investigate why we have such a strong thought of always protecting ourselves and not wanting to take any loss, we can see it is because of a strong self-cherishing mind. The self-cherishing mind is the root cause of all the problems we face in life. It makes things difficult because, realistically, you cannot always be the winner. Further, our security and happiness depend on others, not just those who are close to us, but others who live in our society.

The cause for everyone in our society to enjoy sustained peace, happiness, and harmony is the mind of loving kindness and compassion. If we show such a mind to the people who are close to us, it will eventually bring them even closer. Through this attitude of love and compassion, you can be a source of happiness to others, as well as a source of joy and inspiration for yourself.

In the long run, it is more beneficial to think of others, to show care and interest in other beings' needs, while trying to reduce your own selfish aims by giving the victory to others or taking the loss upon yourself. Whatever the outcome of a situation in which we act out of love and compassion to others, there will be justice there. On the other hand, if our actions are selfishly motivated to bring some immediate gain for ourselves, we may look back and feel guilty. This can cause us to be discouraged or depressed.

As the verse says, if we do not challenge this self-cherishing mind, it can bring more suffering to our life, which already has enough suffering and problems. In the example of the relationship situation, there could already be enough conflict and disagreement there. Yet, if you do not try to reduce this self-centred mind, it can add even more suffering to that relationship, an outcome that neither you nor the other person may want. If you do not try to overcome this self-cherishing mind, you will only add more suffering to your life.

We will end the teaching here and, as usual, we will do the Buddha's mantra. Once again, could everyone take up their meditation posture, and just relax the mind and the body:

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

Transcribed from the tapes by Rita Feldmann Edited by Mary-Lou Considine Edit checked against the tapes by Dianne McDonald Edited Version

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