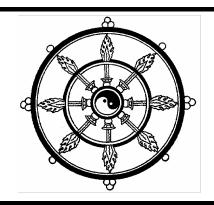
Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons" A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga Translated by Samdup Tsering

७७ र्ते ह्वें र अर्कें न क प्रोपेर लें।

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We will do some breathing meditation first. Just relax your body and choose the most suitable sitting posture.

Now focus on the purpose of this meditation practice, which is to achieve true wisdom knowledge, a true sense of discrimination. To gain this, we have to go through a process. The first step is to listen to or study the teachings. This enables us to learn something we haven't learned before. The next step is contemplating or thinking about what we have learned. Through contemplation, the topic becomes familiar to our minds. Having become familiar with the topic, we then do the meditation practice to internalise that knowledge as an inner realisation.

Meditation is also a process of transforming and disciplining our mind. If we understand the outcomes of meditation, we can appreciate the practice more. We can see that, in terms of achieving our aims, it is truly beneficial in terms of eliminating unwanted problems and directing our life in the right way.

In fact, the term 'meditation' in Tibetan is *gom*, which means to become familiar with, or get used to, something. So when we engage in meditation practice, our main focus is the mind. We are familiarising the mind with something that can bring us more peace, happiness, and satisfaction. We also need to recognise the things to be overcome in the mind – for instance, our lack of faith in our spiritual practice, or in the spiritual objects of refuge.

We may also want to get rid of strong, desirous attachment, which can make the mind restless and cause unending dissatisfaction; or we may want to get rid of anger and hatred. If we look into the mind, we can see there is some kind of destructive state or force. When the mind is influenced by that state, we have no peace, we lose our mental stability, and we go through emotional disturbances. Therefore, through meditation practice we direct the mind to an object or topic and discipline it, getting rid of the negative states of mind or delusions that disturb it. You can practise meditation to counteract a specific mental delusion that frequently bothers your mind and emotions.

To sum up, meditation is a positive potential within us, a means of overcoming all the mental delusions or negative states of mind, which are also within us.

We will begin the breathing meditation practice. The first step is to remove all distracting thoughts and let the mind rest fully inward. Having done this, we start the breathing meditation. Rather than letting the mind wander after external objects, we rest it on the in-breath and out-breath. The way we should focus the mind on the breath is as if the mind is dissolving into, or becoming one with, the breath. It should not be like perceiving an object with our eyes, when there is a gap between the mind and the object. Rather try to let the mind and the object become one.

Having a positive, peaceful and happy mind is essential. If we have these qualities within the mind, regardless of what happens or what possessions we have or have not, we remain happy, calm, and relaxed. Having an attitude of loving kindness and compassion towards others is another precious quality to have. As we follow this spiritual path, we must remember to cherish and safeguard the good qualities within us. The negative, destructive qualities on the other hand, are something we must try to eliminate. Whatever spiritual practice we do should be aimed at these goals.

Now we will move to the commentary on the thought transformation text [*The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*]. We are now up to verse 58, which reads:

Our wish to be happy is strong at all times, Yet we do not gather merit to yield this result. We have little endurance for hardship and suffering, Yet ruthlessly push for the things we desire.

This indicates that our desire for happiness is always strongly present. However, it says here that there is no point in having strong desire, because the wish is never going to be fulfilled unless we attain the right conditions or causes.

Let's look at why we have this strong desire for happiness. Its intensity varies from person to person. Some of the factors that pre-determine this desire for happiness come from our upbringing. If you take into account a well-developed country like Australia, most people here have an easy life from birth. If you look at a place like Tibet, only a few classes of people – like the aristocracy or some very high lamas or reincarnated lamas – have such a privileged, easy life.

For people who have had an easy upbringing, their desire for happiness is generally stronger and harder fulfil than those who have not had an easy life. For most people here, when they were young, their parents fully supported them and took responsibility for providing all their needs. Therefore, many people have not experienced the difficulty of finding basic needs for survival at an early age. This means that what most of us generally deem happiness is not simple to achieve, but

must depend upon many things.

It is important to understand what brings happiness. For instance, if wealth is a source of happiness, we have to create the causes to increase wealth. In the spiritual teachings, one of the main causes to increase one's wealth is the practice of generosity and giving. If we increase our possessions, we also need to be able to fully and freely utilise them.

Of course, possessions are not the only source of happiness; we also need a good form of life, like this human one. The main cause of this is practising moral ethics. Our happiness also depends on having a good circle of friends. The cause for this is the practice of patience. Also, we want to see the end of whatever task we begin, and be successful in whatever we do. The cause for this is the practice of joyful effort. If we possess all of these sources of happiness - wealth, a good life, friends, and so on - and they become a cause of more delusions, we defeat the purpose and our lives become meaningless. The cause of preventing this is to practice stabilisation, concentration, meditative discriminating wisdom.

The text says: "We have little endurance for hardship and suffering". Why do we have such little endurance? When we undertake study or a job, as soon as we face problems, we can easily lose our motivation. This shows how weak our sense of determination is to confront the situation. Part of the reason we have such little endurance is that, throughout our lives, we have never had to suffer any really difficult situations. Rather, even when some slight problem or loss happens, we easily get disturbed. This shows that we have not learned about true hardship and suffering – our life so far has been too easy.

The next line says: "Yet ruthlessly we push for the things that we desire". As said before, if we have a strong wish to be happy, we have to create the causes. If we have a strong desire and do *not* create the causes and cannot endure hardships, we lack the ability to fulfill what we want to achieve. Yet, even if the degree of ambition and determination we require to fulfill a desire makes it completely out of the question, we may still crave it.

For example, there are some people who put very little time into study, yet still wish to become great scholars. And even if they have qualifications, skills, and experience, they still may have a great desire to be a person in a high, influential position. In spiritual institutions, for example, there are some people who lack knowledge, experience, and the intention to put an effort into their study. Yet they dream of being the head of the institution and becoming a teacher to many others! This craving only acts as a source of frustration.

The point of considering this is that we need to check the mind, to see what sort of things we desire, and whether we are ready to create the causes to fulfill our desire or not. This is how we can find out what we wish to achieve in our lives, and find more satisfaction, lead a more contented life.

If our desire is not checked, there can be a huge difference between what is going on in our mind, and what we can actually do. Unfulfilled desire is the cause of frustration and depression. Not being able to fulfill one's desire can make one feel incapable. As said before, if we desire something big, we have to put in a greater amount of effort, make a bigger commitment, and be more determined to fulfill that desire. We must examine the causes for fulfilling our desires, because if all the causes can be fulfilled, we know that our desires and wishes can be fulfilled. But if these factors cannot be fulfilled, it means that our desires cannot be fulfilled. However, normally we do not consider this.

There are two causes for fulfilling desire: one is the suitable factors, and the other is the hindrances. Suitable factors are those we have to gather to fulfill the desire, and hindrances are what we have to avoid, or factors that must be confronted and not allowed to become hindrances. The text is saying that with endurance, any obstacle we face does not stop us doing what we have to do. But if we lack endurance, the obstructions we face can discourage us and cause us to discontinue what we are doing.

As a result, we feel that we have failed. We put ourselves down and have a low self-image because of not being able to fulfill our desires. Geshe Doga advises that it is important, especially when you are young, to be prepared to show endurance as much as possible, and not be frightened, not run away from hardships. Rather, it is important to confront them. For example, if you are studying, you may face hardship. Whatever you are doing, try to think of taking on all the hardships and difficulties of your life at this early age. With this type of determination, you can accomplish more things in your life.

To lead a happy life, you do not necessarily have to be a religious practitioner. How you live your life and whether you find happiness or suffering is all up to you. If you think about living to seventy or eighty years of age, what are the things you can do that will bring more happiness and minimise suffering in your life? The answer is obviously that the best time to begin is when you are young – physically and mentally fresh and with more energy. There are many things for which, if you put more effort into them from an early age and face up to the challenges and difficulties, at a later stage in life you will find easier.

The attitude of trying to enjoy as much as possible at an early age – and leaving problems and hardships for the future – can be misleading. We should not simply let desire rule our lives. Rather, we should try to think, as said before, of how we might fulfill a desire. If we cannot possibly fulfill that desire, we should try to think of getting rid of it.

We will leave the teaching here, and we'll do the Buddha's mantra seven times. As before, we can sit in the meditation posture, making sure that the body is fully relaxed. Then we can chant the mantra, and focus the mind on it.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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