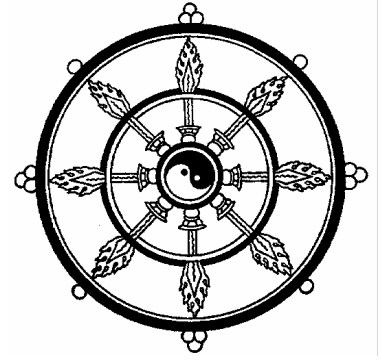


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

འོ་སྤྱོད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



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We'll do some breathing meditation first. Sit comfortably and relax the body.

When we sit in a meditation posture, we create the causes for peace and calm, because we have physically distanced ourselves from busy activity. At the same time, we need to find peace within the mind, which means getting rid of our busy way of thinking. So, after adopting the right meditation posture and relaxing the body, relax the mind within, trying to remove all outgoing thoughts.

When we begin the breathing meditation, we simply focus the mind on the in-breath and out-breath, without being distracted by any other object. As much as possible, we should try to maintain single-pointed concentration on the breath.

True peace and rest comes from within the mind, rather than from physical rest. As said before, when we adopt a meditation posture, we are supposed to be physically at rest, because we have put aside all busy activities. However, if the mind is not also resting, we don't feel relaxed. For the mind to truly rest, it has to be free of mental activity, such as distracting thoughts. The famous Tibetan master, Geshe Sharawa said that if one does not understand which are the right or wrong objects to occupy the mind, then one cannot find mental rest. But for one who has mastered the mind, he or she can even transform unfavorable situations into favorable ones.

The best thing we can learn from meditation practice is how to change our situation by changing the mind. Through meditation, we can learn how our mind influences our experience of life. Outer conditions are not always the cause of bringing problems or confusion into our lives. When we think about it, even if externally we have good living conditions, we can have serious problems and be unhappy. We may visibly be achieving many things, and have excellent, comfortable living conditions. But, despite these good conditions, deep inside we may still feel dissatisfied and unhappy, as if something is not quite right or as if something is missing.

This sense of unhappiness originates within the mind. When we focus on finding a solution to our problems within the mind, we can see that certain states of mind make us feel dissatisfied. Depending on the circumstance, we may feel unhappy because of holding feelings of anger, hatred, jealousy, or competitiveness in relation to others. Therefore, it is our mind that does not appreciate our outer favorable conditions - rather, it is

always dwelling somewhere else.

When we talk of the practice of mind transformation, we do not mean that our happiness depends entirely on the mind. It is also important to secure the right external causes for personal peace and happiness.

The benefit of practising mind transformation and learning about the mind is that we can at least make the best use of our material achievements and health. Our external achievements are meant to bring us more happiness. However, this means learning to feel content about what we've achieved. The best way to do this is to increase both our inner and outer wealth, hand in hand. When we do this, there will be no conflict between our inner achievements and our outer wealth, or vice versa.

As for developing outer wealth, we don't need to discuss it here, because you know what to do. Developing inner wealth is also important because it is the true source of happiness and peace in life. If we make progress in developing outer, but not inner wealth, we will not add to our peace and happiness. We will defeat the purpose of making outer progress, which is to improve our quality of life.

As we turn the mind towards meditation practice, we increase our inner wealth by developing more positive states of mind and making an effort to diminish the negative states of mind. From a very early stage in life, it is important to increase the positive qualities and decrease the negative qualities of the mind - for instance, by having an attitude of compassion and love for other beings, and by not being obsessed with them, or not feeling hatred, jealousy or competitiveness towards them.

As we make progress in improving our external living conditions, we can also keep checking the mind, making sure that we are making inner progress and not letting the mind go downhill. As much as possible, we must try to minimise feelings of pride, hatred, jealousy, and competitiveness towards others as we accumulate material wealth. If left unchecked, these negative states of mind can create problems and diminish our quality of life.

On the other hand, if you increase your positive states of mind, you will find more peace and happiness, and your material accomplishments will have some meaning because you will have achieved a happy life.

The aim of meditation practice is to diminish mental

delusions or negative states of mind. In our meditation, we should target the strongest delusion - such as anger or jealousy - that causes many of our day to day problems. We should ensure beforehand that we learn the specific meditations for overcoming that delusion and use those meditations in our practice. As the great Tibetan master has said, what we are doing in meditation practice is ridding the mind of wrong objects that cause delusions, and attuning the mind to meditation objects that enhance inner peace.

His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, once likened a spiritual practitioner to a soldier. Just as a soldier's main job is to defeat enemies, the spiritual practitioner's job is to challenge the inner enemies of mental delusions.

We study the spiritual teachings not just to increase our knowledge, but also to reduce our inner faults and make ourselves better persons. The spiritual teachings should also help us find more meaning, peace, and happiness, as well as help us solve our problems. To motivate ourselves to put these teachings into practice, we must understand the benefits of meditation practice, and feel confident that it is an effective means of finding happiness and of solving the problems we continually face.

Once you have started to follow the spiritual path of meditation practice, you should try to notice any positive change in terms of how your life is now compared to how it was before you integrated meditation practice into your life. There is no doubt that meditation practitioners can benefit from their practice, because even though it seems to require a lot of effort, its effectiveness can be clearly seen. If we compare our experience in the past, when some mental delusion such as jealousy would habitually arise in the mind, we will realise that the absence of that delusion creates more peace and stability within the mind.

As said before, true spiritual practice is about decreasing mental delusions. The benefit of spiritual practice is obvious - you will have fewer delusions arising in the mind. Having fewer delusions means that you can be a happier, gentler, kinder person.

Many people who do not regularly practise meditation have said that learning about meditation has given their lives a different dimension, a different way of looking at things. They say that they notice the benefits when they confront an experience that had looked heavy and overwhelming in the past - now, it does not look so overwhelming because the knowledge they have gained of meditation has given them a different way of looking at it. So, if you regularly practise meditation, you will obviously gain even more benefit from the practice.

That's all for the teaching for tonight. We will chant the Buddha's mantra seven times. As at the start of this teaching, we will choose the right sitting posture, relax the mind fully within, and begin the chanting by focusing the mind solely on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNIYE SOHA
