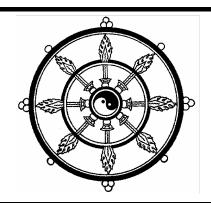
## Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons" A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga Translated by Sandup Tsering

७७ तें ह्वेंद्र सर्वें न क' प्रवेंद्र त्यें।

20 October 1999



We will do a few minutes breathing meditation first. Sit in the meditation posture, relaxing the body.

On top of this physical relaxation, if we also experience mental relaxation, we can truly feel ourselves to be at rest. To bring about mental peace, we need to get rid of distracting thoughts in the mind - that is, any thoughts that causes inner disturbance, unease, or restlessness.

It is important for us to look for inner peace and happiness, and learn how to bring this about. We cannot automatically find it through physical rest. When we are resting, but feel emotionally or mentally distracted or disturbed, we need to understand why this happens. Therefore, it is worth checking and observing the mind to try and understand why the mind is so busy and overpowered by various wandering thoughts.

What does it mean to make the mind peaceful? It means removing all distracting thoughts, getting rid of the various objects and distractions in the mind. Try to see, as much as possible, the disadvantages of distracting thoughts - basically, they imprison and enslave the mind. Try to understand that when you have these thoughts, your mind is not clear and lacks direction.

Is there any effective means by which we can clear away these thoughts so that the mind can be left alone?

If we use our own sense of discrimination and intelligence, we can see the disadvantages of having unnecessary thoughts in the mind, and how they are the cause of disturbing our peace of mind. We can use that same intelligence to see that it is possible to train the mind. Instead of allowing distracting thoughts and external objects to overpower the mind, we can choose which object we would like to fix the mind on.

Regardless of how long your mind can focus on a selected object, whenever it is focused on that object, you have some control over it, rather than letting it be disturbed by distracting thoughts. So, meditation practice means to familiarise yourself with the practice of placing your mind on a specific object. As we make progress in familiarising the mind with a given object, outer distractions have less influence on the mind. This is how we can bring more concentration, peace, and clarity to the mind.

Keeping the above points in mind, we will begin the breathing meditation. As said before, first adopt the meditation posture, making sure it is comfortable and that you physically feel at rest. Then try to rest the mind and remove all outgoing thoughts, bringing the mind

fully within. Then you can begin the breathing meditation, directing the mind to the incoming and outgoing breath.

It is important to realise how inner peace and happiness can be achieved through transforming the mind by training it.

We will now go over the text, *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*. Verse 71 reads:

We seek to have homes in monastic seclusion Yet, drawn by distractions, we venture to town.

While these instructions are meant for ordained monks living in monasteries, it is important for all of us to find a physically and environmentally quiet and peaceful place where we can mentally disengage from busy worldly activities.

Explicitly, however, these lines are instructions to practitioners living in a monastery, or cave, or any solitary place away from the hustle and bustle of society. They can forget the purpose of living in that secluded, peaceful place. The purpose is to achieve inner peace and happiness. Even though these practitioners may live in a quiet environment, mentally they may be preoccupied with various activities. They may even physically go to a town or city, and indulge in distracting activities.

Some monks in monasteries, instead of dedicating their time to meditation practice, may use their time to go to town and mix with the lay community, performing rituals and ceremonies for them and engaging in mundane activities. This is wrong because, as said before, what we as practitioners are trying to achieve is peace and happiness in the mind. To achieve this, we need to get rid of delusions within the mind, as well as the causes and conditions that give rise to these delusions.

Even if the place where you live is quiet and secluded, if you go out and seek noisy places and engage in distracting activities, you cannot achieve inner peace, which means that you won't find any peace when you are alone. Not matter how secluded your residence is, if your mind is not disciplined, you will indulge in distracting activities. These deprive you of your peace and happiness and, even though you may have stopped being busy with activities, you will find no peace and happiness when you are alone.

The point is that it is more important to mentally - rather than physically - isolate ourselves from distracting objects to achieve inner peace and happiness. You can live in a town and have many social interactions, but mentally you can remain calm and in control of yourself. You do not allow mental delusions like desire, hatred, and jealousy to disturb your mind, so that it is always peaceful, even if you live in a noisy, busy, large environment and get involved with doing many things. If your mind is peaceful, there is less likelihood that mental delusions will arise and more likelihood that your mind will remain peaceful and happy.

The next two lines of the verse say:

Discourses we hear teach us most noble practice, Yet we spend all our time telling fortunes with dice.

This reminds us of the contradiction between what we hear and learn about, and what we actually do in our lives. In the case of living in a monastery, what you hear are the profound teachings on the stages of the path to complete enlightenment. However, your actions may have no connection - they may be totally opposite to these teachings. So, rather than spending your time telling other people's fortunes - making divinations and even deceiving others out of a desire for wealth or reputation and so on - you should be putting the teachings into practice.

If you do not put the Dharma teachings into practice, then whatever you learn will not enhance your mental peace or help you become a calmer, better person. Why? Because if you do not put the Dharma into practice, you are not decreasing the mental delusions - rather, through your actions you are increasing them. It is important to understand that the purpose of Dharma and meditation is to diminish the mental delusions. No only do we have to learn the Dharma, but we also have to effectively put it into practice so that we can diminish mental delusions. When the delusions are diminished, more peace will arise in the mind.

When we learn worldly knowledge and skills, to make use of those skills we have to undertake some action and put them into practice. However, worldly actions are usually motivated by desire, hatred, pride, or competitiveness. The more worldly actions we do, the more restlessness, stress, and unhappiness we experience. Therefore, it is important to remember when you are putting Dharma or spiritual practice into action, that the motivation that precedes your spiritual actions should not be the same motivation that precedes your worldly actions.

The main cause of our wrong and unskillful actions is the self-cherishing attitude. The text says next:

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.

We will leave tonight's teaching here and, as usual, we will chant Shakyamuni Buddha's mantra seven times. Could you again sit in the meditation posture, relax yourself, and check the mind, making sure there are no distracting thoughts. Then, as we begin the chanting, try to focus the mind on the mantra.

## TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNIYE 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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