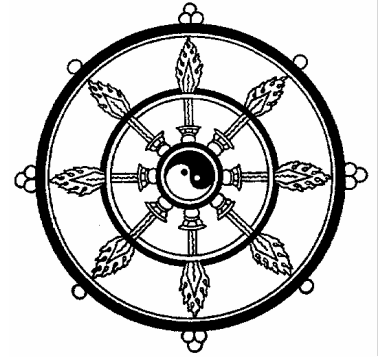


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

འདྲེན་སྐྱོད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



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We will do a few minutes breathing meditation first. Make sure that your body is at rest and choose the most comfortable meditation posture.

The most effective way of finding peace and relaxation is achieving some calmness within the mind. Without this, even if we physically find some rest, it is of no real benefit to us.

What exactly is this peace within our mind, inner peace? Just as we talk of physical rest, inner peace is something we find when we put aside the physical world and find ourselves in a peaceful environment. Likewise, we can find this mental or inner peace when we stop unchecked mental activity and control wandering thoughts. This occurs when the mind rests completely within us, rather than us physically being here and the mind being far away. It is important for the mind not to always be agitated or disturbed by external thoughts or objects.

In a way, we are examining our capabilities and recognising that our ability to achieve things depends not only on our physical capabilities, but also on the mental capacity behind our actions. In our spiritual practice and meditation - and even in simple, mundane activities - the more effort we put into mentally focusing our energy onto one task and physically completing the actions, the more effective will be the outcome of those actions

We can see how important it is to bring the mind fully inward to make the most of our mental capacity and energy. If the mind is under the influence of a distracting thought, its focus and energy will be diverted. This is the most important thing to remember in seeking inner peace and happiness - relaxing the mind is more effective than physical rest for creating the causes of inner peace.

Keeping this in mind, at the beginning of this meditation practice, we must bring the mind fully inward and focus on eliminating all outgoing thoughts. Once we have done this, we can begin the breathing meditation, putting all of our mental focus on the incoming and outgoing breath.

We should try to integrate this meditation practice into our daily life as an important means of finding peace and happiness and of helping us to resolve our problems. As an alternative way of achieving these goals, this meditation practice can show us how peace and happiness do not necessarily depend on external conditions.

When we talk about 'inner peace and happiness', we are referring to something we can find within ourselves. The

way to find it is by overcoming all distracting thoughts of external, physical or sensual objects that appear to give us a sense of peace, happiness, and satisfaction. Without considering that happiness does not depend on external objects and experiences, and that it can be achieved through meditation practice, we cannot begin to experience inner peace. Because of our strong belief that happiness is achieved externally, we develop a strong attachment to external objects. However, if we investigate the experiences in our lives that bring us true peace and happiness, we will see that the objects we desire only give us a temporary peace and happiness, which is neither lasting nor reliable.

If we examine our experiences closely, we will see that the main sources of unhappiness and dissatisfaction in our lives are unfulfilled desires. Yet we make great sacrifices and go to great lengths to fulfill our desire for these external objects. If we consider the various types of problems and difficulties we face and our unending complaints, we will see that once we solve one problem, another always seems to appear. As soon as we achieve one object, we often start desiring another, continuously tormenting ourselves to achieve more external goals and objects in the belief that they will bring happiness and satisfaction. But, ultimately, whatever happiness we achieve through doing this, the result is often frustration and disappointment, because it is not the kind of happiness we are looking for.

It is beneficial to realise from your own experience that these sensual objects do not bring the lasting peace and happiness you seek. We need to minimise our desire for external objects and also try to minimise the belief that they are the ultimate or true source of peace and happiness. We must also try to show the mind that lasting peace and happiness are things that we can find within ourselves, when our minds are free of distracting thoughts caused by desire.

Practising meditation can be beneficial in helping us to understand this better, as well as helping us to solve problems we cannot solve externally. When we are experiencing problems, by practising meditation and observing the simple guidelines - such as those for the breathing meditation, or any other form of meditation - we can see how effective meditation is for instantly making us feel happier and more peaceful.

With such an understanding of the spiritual teachings, we realise that we can achieve happiness through both spiritual and external or worldly means. As discussed

earlier, worldly success is not necessarily going to bring peace and happiness. It is best if we can try to combine the worldly and the spiritual means. Without the right external conditions, it would be hard to live happily, because we need food, clothes, and shelter to survive. As these external conditions are essential for a happy life, we need to try to provide them. However, at the same time, we must also try to make use of spiritual practice in our lives in order to create the best conditions for happiness.

By integrating spiritual practice with the right external conditions, we can bring some meaning and satisfaction to our life. Whatever worldly or financial success you have can become meaningful. Spiritual practice is about ensuring that we always maintain a wholesome or positive state of mind. This, together with suitable material conditions, makes it possible to bring even more satisfaction to one's life. External achievement can then become a source of fulfillment.

On the contrary, if we lack a positive state of mind, day-to-day life can become a problem. In fact, the more success you obtain, the greater your problems. For instance, if your mind were filled with desires - which arise naturally and easily - they would not decrease once your wealth increased. In fact, they would increase as your wealth increased. Further, your mind would more easily be filled with jealousy, hatred, and competitiveness. If you did not try to control your mind all types of mental delusions would arise, and your wealth and material success would be a direct cause of pride. Your unchecked mind would cause you to abuse others and disparage them.

Even if you are materially successful and enjoy good living conditions, if your mind is filled with negativity and delusions, you will have not peace or happiness. We all know that when the mind is filled with anger or hatred, we feel bad, as we do when jealous. Desire can also torment us, although it is said that compared to other mental delusions, desire is not such an obvious cause of suffering, because it perceives its object as being pleasant and appealing. Because of this, it is easy for the mind to become attracted to such ideas, in the same way that we can play tricks on children.

It is important to recognise and reflect on the shortcomings of negative states of mind or mental delusions. Spiritual practice and meditation is the best way to overcome these states of mind within us. In this way, we can be inspired and motivated to undertake the practice - because we understand how the practice benefits us, we can effectively apply it in diminishing negative states of mind.

We will leave the teaching here for tonight and, as usual, we will finish by chanting the Buddha's mantra seven times. Once again, please sit in the meditation posture, try to relax the body, and draw the mind fully inward by removing all wandering thoughts. Then, as we begin chanting, just focus the mind on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA
