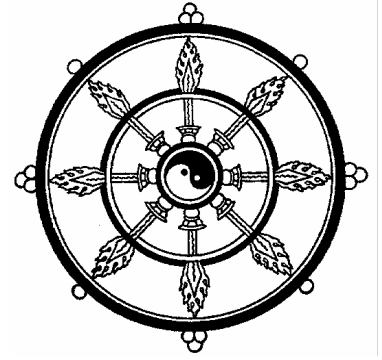


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

འཇིགས་མེད་མཚོ་ཆེན་པོ་འཕྲིན་ལོ་།



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As usual, we'll do some breathing meditation for a few minutes. As you sit in the meditation posture, try to relax your body. Next, generate the correct motivation for doing this meditation: that is, by engaging in this meditation practice, we will calm our disturbed mind and make it more peaceful and stable.

We do meditation practice to control the mind and to understand more about the way it works. When we do this, we can see that it is like a river diverging in every direction, scattered by various distracting thoughts. Just as diverging water cannot create a forceful current, our distracted mind lacks focus and power. Through this meditation practice, however, we try to bring the mind fully inward, consolidating the mind's energies. This will enable us to develop discriminating wisdom.

The main part of meditation practice is the practice of mindfulness and alertness. So, as we begin this breathing meditation, we should first try to remove all outgoing thoughts and bring the mind or fully inward.

In meditation, we should make sure there is no gap between our mind and the meditation object - we should try to feel that our mind has become one with the object. It's not like looking at the object. Rather, when we meditate, our mind should actually be merged with the object. Keeping this in mind, we will now begin the breathing meditation, focusing on the inhaling and exhaling of the breath.

The famous master, Atisha, said that of all our friends, the supreme friend is the state of mindfulness and alertness. Mindfulness and alertness create a positive state of mind. We need to recognise such a state of mind as our best friend and guide. Mindfulness and alertness are the main tools for ensuring the effectiveness of one's meditation practice.

Mindfulness is a state of mind that maintains a positive outlook. Alertness enables us to differentiate wrong actions from right actions of body, speech and mind. Alertness enables us to recognise and eliminate these faults.

If we have steady mindfulness and alertness, we can make continual progress in our meditation practice, because they ensure that all of our actions of body speech and mind accord with the practice of moral ethics. Because our actions are ethical, we will enjoy inner peace and stability.

The practice of moral ethics lays the foundation for

making progress in our meditation practice. Without this foundation, our mind would be distracted and our actions would be negative, making it impossible to make any progress with our meditation practice. As is said in many texts, the practice of morality is an indispensable cause for developing meditative concentration.

We will now continue this teaching on *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*. We are up to Verse 85, which reads:

We have poor education and limited knowledge;
Whenever we speak we are unsure of ourselves.
Our learning in scriptural texts is so meagre,
When hearing new teachings we doubt they are true.
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 is saying that if we do not approach our meditation practice in the right way, then no matter how much time we spend on the practice, we will never gain any certainty about the truth. It is saying that, before we do meditation practice, we have to familiarise ourselves with what to meditate on, how to meditate, and so forth. It emphasises the importance of studying or listening, then contemplating the topic we are meditating on, before we begin the meditation.

It is recommended that one should begin by studying thoroughly. However, mere study is not enough - we have to then contemplate the subject. Finally, we will be ready to meditate on it. This is how we make progress, starting with gaining the knowledge that comes from studying and listening.

This knowledge is not our own. Rather, we acquire from others, such as our teachers or published texts, or some other outer force. We have to then integrate the knowledge we have gained through learning by contemplating it, utilising our own discriminating wisdom to examine and analyse what we have learned.

When we become certain about it based on our own reasoning, the knowledge we have gained from listening develops into a firmer conviction that only comes from contemplating it. Subsequently, if we engage in meditation practice, we can further deepen that conviction with new insights. Through meditation practice, our knowledge and firm conviction finally develop into an experiential inner realisation.

Similarly, when you acquire an education, it is not

enough to be content with what you learn from a book or from the teacher. Rather, it is important to investigate the subject and understand it using reasoning. After this, you will have more confidence about your understanding of the subject.

One of the reasons why we are not consistent with our meditation practice is that we don't have enough interest or motivation to do the practice. This is because we lack knowledge about why we are doing the practice and so on. Even if we think we have learned a lot about the spiritual teachings, when we actually try to test our faith in the teachings, we find we have little belief. We are not sure about them because doubt always clouds our mind. All our spiritual knowledge thus remains uncertain.

We need to see the importance of blending study, contemplation, and meditation together, thinking over the topics again and again until we finally engage in meditation practice. It is important not to become lazy in this process of mental development. Laziness is the main obstacle. Therefore, we should do everything we can not to fall under its influence.

These teachings can also be related to improving the quality of our worldly lives. This verse reminds us, for example, about the value of education in being able to find a good job. Geshe-la always says that this is especially important in the early years of our life. This is a time when a person is like a bud about to flower: at such a time it is especially important to look after the plant.

If we do well in our studies and acquire different skills, then later it will be easy to get a secure job and make money, which provides stability in our life. Most people who have a secure job and income have a stable life as a result of their discipline. Whereas those who haven't got financial and employment security are generally those associated with violence and problems in our society.

Whatever we choose to do, whether it is a spiritual practice or mundane activity, the most effective thing is to use our mind. If you want to practise dharma, use your mind as much as possible to develop an understanding of dharma. If you want to pursue a worldly goal, use your mind to understand the best way of achieving that goal, and of avoiding obstacles that will prevent you achieving it.

Even if we don't believe in any spiritual teachings but believe only in this life, the most important thing is happiness, particularly mental happiness. Regardless of his or her outer conditions, a person who has found inner happiness can always be happy and content. The next is physical happiness – enjoying good health and being fit. There are people who do not believe in any religion but who find happiness and satisfaction in this way. That is fine – finding happiness is the purpose of life.

The most important thing for us to do is use our mind to understand what brings us happiness. We have to think about this over and over. Then you will see that happiness is the outcome of the way you view things, your attitude. Try to understand which attitudes bring

more inner stability, strength, peace and happiness.

As we said earlier, meditation practice is about practising mindfulness and alertness. Mindfulness means not forgetting and sustaining those things that are important for one's inner peace and happiness. Physical happiness is also important. Again, we use our mindfulness to understand the conditions that bring health and physical fitness.

The reason we follow spiritual teachings is to achieve inner peace and happiness. We need to think about how we can create the causes of inner happiness. In fact, as said earlier, what we really want in life is peace and happiness. Thus we should apply our spiritual practice to our everyday lives.

It is wrong to think that our daily life is mundane and that we have to perform our spiritual practice outside of it. Rather, there should not be any difference between our worldly life and our spiritual life. If we don't have inner peace, stability and happiness in our worldly life, then we don't have them at all. If our spiritual practice doesn't benefit our daily life, then it doesn't benefit us at all.

That's all for teaching tonight. We will finish by chanting the Buddha's mantra seven times. As before, try to sit in a meditation posture, relaxing the body, removing all distracting thoughts and settling the mind inward. Then, as we begin the chanting, we focus the mind on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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