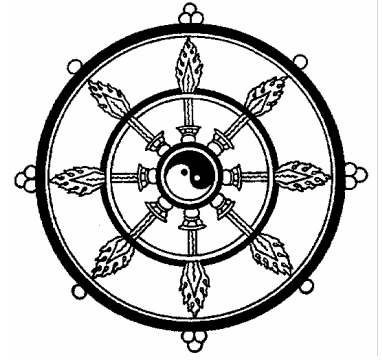


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

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We begin with a few minutes breathing meditation. Having assumed the meditation sitting posture most suitable for you, then try to fully relax your body. It is also important for the meditation practice to try to prepare your mind by removing all distracting thoughts, and by making sure your mind is residing within. Try to instil inward peace without any influence from thoughts.

It is good to have some knowledge of why it is necessary to get rid of distracting thoughts and engage in meditation practice. It's important to have some general knowledge and belief in the meditation practice you are engaging in. It is to achieve your desires or goals. Therefore, it is important to have some recognition of the goal we are trying to achieve through meditation, and why we do meditation instead of trying to achieve that same goal through other means. Generally speaking, the goal of meditation is the same goal we always seek in our life - but because we are not able to achieve it, we become very frustrated, confused and unhappy. Of course, the goal is some sense of happiness or peace. When we try to examine the conditions that ensure the peace and happiness we are looking for, it is not just the right physical conditions, like physical rest. For instance, even if right now we are not physically engaged in any activities and may find ourselves a moment of rest, if our mind does not stop, if for instance it falls under the influence of distracting thoughts, then it will continue to go round and round various things. Instead of resting, we still feel very unpleasant and unhappy.

We have to understand that for us to achieve our own experience of happiness, of being on top of everything, of having all the material conditions of physical wellbeing, we also have to create the right conditions for our mind to also be peaceful and happy. Meditation practice mainly involves us understanding our mind, helping us learn what is preventing us from finding peace and happiness. One of the main causes is the distracting thoughts our mind falls under, making it impossible to rest the mind. Right now, as well as having some understanding of what we are trying to achieve in meditation practice, and what we are supposed to do in the practice, we must also have some confidence we can achieve our goal through meditation. We can achieve this because we have all the capacities, potential, freedom and all other necessary conditions to train our mind, and to bring some transformation to it. All that is needed is to seize this opportunity and engage in the practice.

To begin this meditation, just try to remove all the

distracting thoughts and gently and gradually try to settle the mind inward. Having done this, then direct your mind to focus on the breath, just the going out and in, and trying to prevent any other distracting thoughts arising.

Whenever we engage in meditation practice, we are making an attempt to understand our mind better - our mental attitude or way of thinking. It's important to try to understand our mind because it is the source of all our actions, and even the type of personality we have. Even in our day-to-day life, whatever we experience - whether it is something happy, unhappy, very sad or cheerful - can be related, linked or connected to our own way of thinking. When we engage in meditation practice, it's important that we don't just sit there with a 'blind' mind. Rather, it is important to try to have a very clear mind and to be very alert, mindful and watchful of our mind. Try to understand the type or state of mind that has been arising in you. And then make a special effort to try to cultivate a different state of mind, to trying to give way or pave the way to a different way of thinking. When you do that, then you can experience the effect of the different way of thinking you cultivated in meditation practice as something different from your normal way of thinking and state of mind.

It is said that if it is possible, try to check your mind - examine or investigate it - even three times a day. Or, if that is not possible or too hard to remember, then as some masters in the past practised - at least check your mind before you go to sleep. Try to reflect on your mind, and what type of thoughts you generated throughout the day. You can even try to count the number of negative types of attitudes and thoughts you generated, and how many positive states of mind you have generated. Of course, the whole purpose of this exercise is to try to find ways to improve your life and way of thinking, and through this to then find more peace and happiness. On the other hand, it's also about reducing the problems you face in life, and reducing the non-virtuous, harmful or negative actions you create. It's a process of always trying to watch and correct your mind. It is very effective, similar in a way to self-therapy.

As we become more aware of our mind, it becomes clearer how all the problems and suffering we experience in life all arise from the negative states of mind we generate. Whereas the peace and happiness we experience are outcomes of positive states of mind. We can try to identify and recognise this causal link between

actions and results. Negative actions result in suffering and trouble in one's life and positive actions are those which serve as the source of happiness. At the end of the day when you assess the states of mind you have generated throughout the day, if you find you have generated large amounts of negative states, then, of course, it's important to feel some remorse. This is not just a feeling of guilt, rather it's about having a strong resolution and determination to get rid of and purify the negative feelings. As to the positive states of mind you have generated, try to rejoice in these and feel even more inspired and positive to cultivate even more such states of mind. What you are doing is talking to yourself and your mind. If a lot of negative states of mind have been generated, then tell off your mind. If more positive state of mind have been generated, then praise your mind. The whole aim of this process is to try to slowly understand your mind, and then step-by-step, to slowly develop more positive qualities and states of mind.

In this whole thing of mind training and transformation, we are not saying that there is no need to good outer conditions in life. But what this teaching is showing us is in fact how much we can solve our problems - cure our own disease - by ourselves. If we talk of understanding the wellbeing or health of our mind, then we are the only one who can have the best understanding of this. Of course, we hear that there are people who can read others' minds, through some clairvoyant powers or whatever. But it is extremely rare for any other person to have that kind of super-ability. Not only are we the best person to understand our own physical wellbeing, and to even be the best doctor to diagnose our own physical diseases and problems, it can also be the same for our own mind. We can be the best doctor for diagnosing and curing our own mental illnesses as well. It is clear to us that if we can look after the health of our own bodies, and through this, prevent many diseases, and even cure and recover from many health problems. Likewise, this teaching on mind training shows us how are in a position to take full care of our mental health. If there is any illness or anything causing problem in our mind, we have the ability to get rid what is causing the problem. By engaging in mind training, we can see that the main reason all these problems exist is due to a certain way of thinking and our view and perspective of things. It becomes obvious that in order to overcome the problems, we have to change this way of thinking.

Geshe-la said that there is not much time left to go over the text, however there is a little bit of time, so if anyone has a question, please feel welcome to ask.

Question: Are there any specific benefits to chanting mantras?

Geshe-la: Yes, there are specific benefits! When we chant mantras, we are producing a certain type of sound with a specific tone or rhythm. It is said that when our mind is focused on the rhythm or very specific sound of a special mantra, it can be very effective in enhancing some very good feelings within one who is meditating. It is like the same kind of pleasant sort of feeling we get when we

listen to our favourite music or song. That is why Geshe-la recommends focusing on the sound of the mantra.

Geshe-la said that in the west some people sit around fires, and one of the group plays music while all the others just listen and they all enjoy the music. It creates a very peaceful sort of environment, so Geshe-la said just enjoy that! Generally, that's the effect of the sound, in terms of bringing peace in the mind of other beings. Here, we are also talking about the sound of the Lord Buddha's mantras. One of the Lord Buddha's names or epithets is "Shakya Muni" meaning the Victor of Shakya - Shakya being the race of family from which the Buddha comes. Buddha is known as the 'The Great Victor' or 'The Great Conqueror' because he has conquered both types of obstructions - obstruction to liberation from cyclic existence and the obstruction to omniscient mind. It is said that there are tremendous benefits in mentally focusing on or just saying the mantra of the Buddha, in terms of purifying negativities and increasing positive qualities.

Needless to say, we all know how different songs have different effects on people's minds. Some songs are calming and peaceful while some others are very rough and even disturbing to listen to.

Now we are going to chant the Buddha's mantra. As in the beginning, again we sit in meditation posture and relax the body and mind, removing all distracting thoughts. Just try to stabilise the mind inward. Then, as we begin chanting, as we just discussed, we are trying to focus the mind on the sound of the mantra, on just the rhythms of the mantra's sound. We are trying to make sure that there is no other words or objects in our mind.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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