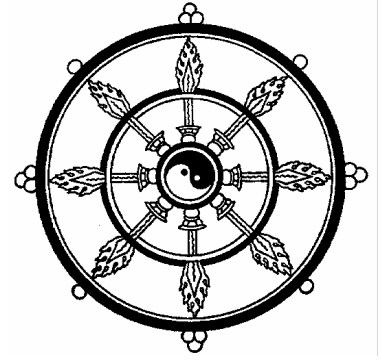


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

འདྲེན་སྐྱོད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



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First, we'll do some breathing meditation. Choose the sitting posture that's most convenient for you.

As well as being able to relax the body in a comfortable sitting posture, we also need to have a relaxed and peaceful mind. We do this by trying to remove all distracting thoughts and letting the mind rest within. Then, after making sure the mind is peaceful, without being influenced by any distracting thought, we begin the breathing meditation.

Rather than letting the mind become distracted once more, we try to discipline it by focusing on the inhaling and exhaling of the breath. In this meditation, as much as possible, we try to get rid of distracting thoughts and focus the mind fully on the breath...*(a few minutes silence)*.

Geshe-la says that if we stay in meditation too long, it may not fair on the mind - it may find it too hard to sit still for so long! He suggests that we should decide how long a meditation session should be according to how well it is going. Meditation is meant to be a peaceful and relaxing experience, rather than a hardship.

We need to make the sessions short enough so that at the end, we still have a strong interest in doing meditation again. It is important not to force your mind to focus on the object and make it stay there for a long time, because this could cause you to hate meditation, and lose your motivation to do the practice again.

Rather than doing long meditation sessions, it is more important that your practice helps you achieve a calm mind. At least for the duration of the meditation practice, you can put aside disturbing thoughts and find a few moments of peace. In fact, you will find that even very short sessions - say five minutes in the early morning - will benefit you, not only during the practice, but also throughout the rest of the day. If you did such a practice regularly, it would make a difference to your life - your mind would be more stable, relaxed and clear.

The more we practice meditation and become more familiar with it, the more we will understand how peace and happiness does not come from outside but from within. In practising meditation effectively, we are removing all distracting thoughts and experiencing the mind resting within. The benefit of this is that we will enjoy peace and satisfaction and feel very positive and even happy about our life. This peace and happiness comes entirely from within one's own mind.

If you did the same practice year after year, you would become more and more skilled in bringing about inner peace and happiness. We need to realise is that there is

an energy within the mind that can bring peace, happiness, satisfaction.

Even if we fail to achieve external success, it doesn't mean that we can't be as happy and peaceful as the next person. We can have the experience of inner peace and happiness by knowing how to achieve it. If we lack this knowledge, our life can quickly become empty, meaningless and depressing when we don't achieve the things we would like to achieve, or don't obtain the things we would like to obtain.

Someone who believes that peace and happiness and life's meaning are equated with material success, comfort and security will become frustrated when these external conditions are not met. If we do not realise that we have the potential to create the causes of our own inner peace, happiness and satisfaction then, when we fail to achieve an outer goal or face an adverse situation, we will be feel devastated and feel our life to be empty. However, if we practise meditation practice regularly, we will experience the benefit.

The mind is the focus of all spiritual training, particularly understanding that one's peace and happiness depends on one's attitude. Being a spiritual practitioner means having less desire and being content with your life. The practice involves reducing desire within the mind. This does not necessarily mean that we should have fewer material possessions. You could have as many material possessions as you liked, but it's important that you are not obsessed about, or attached to, those possessions.

It is important that we are content with whatever wealth and possessions we may have. If we do not reduce our desire, we will feel not just dissatisfaction, but also suffering. Even our possessions will become a source of suffering, and make us dissatisfied. We must therefore focus the mind on trying to overcome unhappiness, dissatisfaction and so forth.

Geshe-la has asked whether anyone has a question. Does anyone have one?

Student: What is the best form of meditation on emptiness?

Geshe Doga: The most important thing in any meditation on emptiness is utilising the reasoning mind, because the emptiness of all objects and phenomena is said to be the ultimate truth of all objects and phenomena.

The only way to establish this view of emptiness in the mind is through reasoning and logic. Of course, your first question would be 'what do you mean by emptiness?' You've got to have some idea of what 'emptiness' is

empty of.

The view of emptiness asserts that everything is empty of inherent existence – in other words, of existence from its own side, or independent existence, or existence that does not depend on any other phenomena. Whenever we experience or perceive something through our mind, the mind grasps at the appearance of that thing as if it existed inherently and independently.

Yet emptiness asserts that everything is empty of such inherent, independent existence. There is no object that exists in itself, independently. One of the most effective ways of refuting inherent existence is contemplating the truth of dependent arising. If you develop a clear understanding of the way all objects exist, you will realise that they are phenomena that arise in dependence on other phenomena.

By understanding the truth of dependent arising, we can refute any wrong ideas we may have about things having inherent existence. The meditation in which you focus on the reasoning basis of dependent arising is said to be very effective for realising emptiness.

Once you understand the truth of dependent arising, you will understand that all things are empty of inherent existence. At the same time, you will develop an understanding of the law of cause and effect. So the realisation of dependent arising can help you to realise emptiness and, at the same time, to realise the truth of cause and effect. In other words, our experience of happiness and suffering and of pain and pleasure is determined by the law of cause and effect.

With such knowledge, we can make spiritual progress, because karma is an important practice. If we can gain some conviction in the law of karma – that positive karma results in happiness and that negative karma result in sufferings – it becomes clear to us that if we want to be happy, we have to create positive karma. Likewise, if we hate suffering, we have to stop creating negative karma.

Therefore, an understanding of depending arising leads a spiritual practitioner to an understanding of emptiness and, at the same time, to taking up the practice of the law of karma and directing all thoughts and actions towards virtue.

Student: What does group karma mean? Does it apply to a very small group of two or three people?

Geshe Doga: First, we need to say a few words about the way the topic of karma is normally presented in the texts. In this presentation, there is a major section known as 'general teachings about karma'. In this section, there is mention of karma having four characteristics that are common to all types of karma. These four are:

- 1) Karma is definite – in the sense that positive karma results in happiness, and negative karma results in suffering.
- 2) Karma increases.
- 3) Karma does not exhaust itself.
- 4) One will not meet with karma that one has not created.

Now to your question. Although it is not specifically mentioned in such presentations, we can talk about

common or public karma, and individual karma. For instance, our world is said to be the result of the common karma of all human and other beings living on the earth. It is common karma in the sense that living on this earth is something that all these beings experience.

We can also talk about the common karma of a group of three people. For instance, if the three people were to create negative karma together, like carrying out a murder, they will have common negative karma.

Likewise, everyone living in Australia has an equal right to enjoy whatever this country has to offer them in terms of a standard of living. In other words, this land is the result of the common karma of everyone living here. We could say that this country's standard of living say is the outcome of the public or common karma of the population.

When we say public or common karma, we mean the sum of the karma created by many individuals. The combined karma created by a group of people creates a result that will be experienced by every one in the group.

It's really not as complex as you think. If ten people put \$10 each into a common fund, they would have \$100 between them. That's what we mean when we talk about the result of common karma.

Geshe Doga has a story that illustrates the idea of common karma. Once upon a time, two people from Tsang, a place in central Tibet, travelled together to Lhasa, the Tibetan capital, a journey that can take over 10 days. One of them was carrying a large quantity of tsampa made from roasted barley flour, which has a fine texture. The other was carrying a much smaller quantity of a coarser flour, made from a type of bean, which had lots of husks in it.

The traveller with the coarse tsampa deceitfully suggested the idea of sharing the tsampa. So, they mixed their tsampa together. Further along the road, the friend who brought the roasted barley tsampa said: "Well, by now your tsampa must have all gone", because he knew that his friend had less than him. The other one said: "You'd better look in our tsampa". Of course, when he did, it had husks in it. That's what we mean when we talking about common karma. Each individual contributes a proportion of the combined result.

This story also tells us how important it is to dedicate our daily spiritual practice to the highest goal. By doing this, the result of our actions becomes more far-reaching. Even if the action is very small, through the power of your dedication and prayer, the result will last longer. Although the man with bean tsampa carried less and poorer quality tsampa, after it was mixed with his companion's tsampa, it lasted as long.

We'll finish tonight's teaching here and chant the Buddha's mantra. Please sit in the meditation posture, making sure that you are comfortable and relaxed, then try to bring the mind fully inward by overcoming all distracting thoughts. As we begin the chanting, the mind should be focused on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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