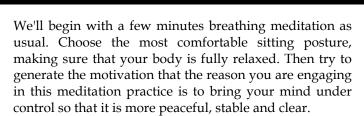
Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons" A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga Translated by Sandup Tsering

७९ वें क्षेर सर्वेत क प्रोवेर खें।







For the mind to be peaceful and stable, it is important that there are no distracting thoughts. So, before engaging in meditation practice, we should first try to slowly let go of all distracting thoughts. Then we can begin the breathing meditation, single-pointedly focusing the mind on the in-breath and out-breath. We will do this for a few minutes...

We will continue with the thought transformation text, *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*. We are up to verse 92, which is a turning point in the text. All the verses preceding this one have covered the shortcomings of the self-cherishing mind in detail. At this point of the text, it is assumed that the student has thought about all those shortcomings and has therefore decided to counteract the self-cherishing mind. Therefore, we are advised to pray to the wrathful deity, Yamantaka, for success in counteracting the self-cherishing mind.

We will read verse 92:

O mighty destroyer of selfishness-demons. With body of wisdom unchained from all bonds, Yamantaka come brandish your skull-headed bludgeon

Of egoless wisdom of voidness and bliss. Without any misgiving now wield your fierce weapon And wrathfully swing it three times round your head.

The verse begins with "O mighty destroyer of selfishness-demons". In Tibetan, this exclamatory word 'O' is 'ema', which implies some sort of revelation. It is referring to all the shortcomings revealed in the preceding verses.

The "mighty destroyer of selfishness-demons" refers to self-grasping, which is the fundamental misconception about the way we exist. Self-grasping is said to be the root cause of the self-cherishing mind. Therefore, in order to overcome the self-cherishing mind, we have to overcome its root cause, which is self-grasping.

We need to know the difference between self-grasping – the root cause of all our mental delusions and harmful behaviour – and the self-cherishing mind. We need to try and see how self-grasping serves as the source of all other mental delusions. We can begin by observing our



own experience of mental delusions such as anger and desire.

If we ask ourselves the meaning of self-grasping, we can say that it is a misconception about the way we really exist. How does one misconceive the "I", which one views as oneself? The self-grasping view regards the "I" as if it exists independently, inherently, and from its own side. This is the "I" which, when it hears some good news, feels very pleased. But when it hears some bad news, it is very upset.

One can investigate one's perception of the way the "I" exists in situations where one experiences it very strongly. Such a situation would be when you are overcome by emotions, such as hearing bad news or hearing unpleasant words from others. At such a time you experience the "I" strongly – it cannot tolerate the unpleasant words.

Unlike it is in normal circumstances, the "I" at such times is vivid. It is the "I" that says it cannot tolerate those words. The "I" is so forceful, it feels as if you cannot control it or stop it. It is so vivid and concrete, you almost feel as if you could touch it.

At such times, if you check on how the "I" exists, you will find that it appears to be self-sufficient. It appears to exist by itself, without depending on any other phenomena. So, when the "I" tells us it cannot tolerate those unpleasant words, our immediate response is anger or hatred towards the speaker. This anger is caused by the misconception about the way the self exists or self-grasping.

This is how self-grasping acts as the root cause of all our problems. All other delusions – such as anger and attachment – arise because of self-grasping. Even the self-cherishing mind arises from self-grasping. The self-cherishing mind is an attitude whereby one cherishes the "I" or self above everyone else – one sees oneself as more significant than all other beings.

However, this is not the way we perceive things in everyday life, because we always tend to blame our problems on outer factors. Whenever we experience something unpleasant, we blame an external cause. But if we check up, the real cause of all our problems and satisfaction is internal.

For example, if we are confronted with an undesirable situation, we usually feel unhappy. If we check up, we can see that the reason we feel so unhappy is that we have chosen to label that situation as a 'problem'. However, if instead we view that adverse situation as being OK, it can immediately diminish our anxiety. Viewing the situation as a burden brings stress and tension to the mind, whereas viewing it as manageable will ease the mind.

The second line of the verse says, "With body of wisdom unchained from all bonds". Here the text is revealing the antidote to the self-cherishing mind. The main antidote is the wisdom that realises selflessness. When one gains that wisdom, one can counteract self-grasping. The wisdom that realises selflessness is able to prove self-grasping as being a wrong view. The more one develops the wisdom of selflessness, the more one's self-grasping will diminish. When self-grasping is completely uprooted from the mind, we will achieve the state of liberation from cyclic existence.

The Tibetan version of this line ("With body of wisdom unchained from all bonds") contains the word 'tathagata', or one who has attained the body of wisdom. Tathagata is another word for 'buddha' or fully enlightened being, and literally means 'one thus gone' (having attained the body of wisdom). The term 'body of wisdom' refers to the truth body of a fully enlightened being, which is the omniscient mind.

This truth body represents the power possessed by all enlightened beings to destroy self-grasping. An enlightened being's physical or form body is not a direct antidote to self-grasping. However, it is because enlightened beings by definition possess the truth body of the omniscient mind within them that they have the power to eradicate self-grasping.

If we try to relate this to our experience, even though we have not of course attained the truth body of an enlightened being, we should understand that we have within our minds the potential to achieve that. If we look into the mind, we can discern two energies or forces there – one is a positive, creative energy, and the other is negative and destructive.

The way to diminish inner negative energy is to increase our positive energy. For instance, the negative energy within us can manifest as anger. However, we also have within us the energy of non-anger and non-hatred that can oppose anger. We can generate that energy to directly challenge the anger. Likewise, the negative energy of desire can be opposed by generating a non-desirous state of mind.

This is why the wisdom realising selflessness is the main antidote to self-grasping. The way these two minds apprehend their objects are diametrically opposed to each other. We need to understand how to relate this to ourselves and how to discern these two energies or forces within us.

We also need to understand how all our problems are related to what is going on in the mind. The reason we feel so unhappy and disturbed is because of our uncontrolled thinking. The message here is very clear – we have to get rid of such thought patterns in order to

overcome our problems. And if our problems are all created by the mind, the only solution is to change our way of thinking.

For example, sometimes we may find it difficult to go to sleep. The cause is that the mind is preoccupied with external objects. When the mind is engaged with external objects, it is impossible for us to sleep. So, we have to try and stop the mind dwelling on the external objects, and try to bring it inward. Even if we find it difficult in the beginning, if we at least make an effort to bring the mind inward and disengage it from gross objects, eventually the distractions may stop and we can get to sleep.

Whatever situation we are in, we have to make some effort in our practice. If we think that we cannot achieve goals such as getting rid of a disturbing thought that continually makes us unhappy, and simply say that we can't do anything about it, then that thought will control us and we will find no solution to our problem.

That's all the teaching for tonight. As usual, we will now chant the Buddha's mantra. Could you again sit in the meditation posture and just relax the body inward. As you begin the chanting, focus the mind on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

Transcribed from the tapes by Gabrielle Thomson Edited by Mary-Lou Considine Edited checked by Sandup Tsering Edited Version

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