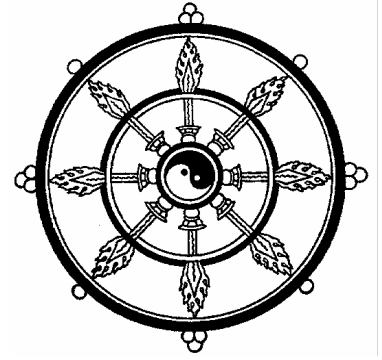


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

འཇིགས་མེད་ཀྱི་རྒྱུད་ལྷན་སྐྱོད་པའི་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ལྟར་དུ།



12 July 2000

We'll do a few minutes breathing meditation first. Relax your body and sit in the meditation posture.

We undertake meditation practice to bring about more inner peace, happiness and stability. The happiness we create the causes for through meditation practice is a very different kind of happiness to the one we normally experience. It's a happiness that comes from achieving calmness within the mind; it is achieved through gradually removing all distractions, allowing the mind to settle within. This enables us to feel truly satisfied.

It's important to realise why this kind of happiness is so essential. The material success we gain from physical work gives our lives some meaning, satisfaction and pleasure. However, this type of happiness requires us to physically keep ourselves busy, to continually engage the mind with distracting objects and meet certain outer conditions.

We are not saying this is not beneficial. But we have to realise that this form of happiness is not sustainable, not lasting. As we said, it is conditional upon physical activity; thus, as we get older and physically weaker, it becomes more difficult to achieve material success and happiness.

Of course, at the time, experiencing material happiness has some benefit. But if we later experience some physical disability, such as old age, we may feel that our life has become devoid of meaning. We will feel depressed and, deep down, feel unfulfilled as a human being.

Therefore, it is important for us to learn right now how to bring about a deeper happiness through overcoming distracting thoughts and achieving a calm mind. The happiness we experience through meditation practice does not depend on outer physical activity. This means that, even if we are by ourselves resting in a room, if the mind is calm, it will rest right there with the body. We do not have to do anything physically to experience happiness and feel good about ourselves.

On the other hand, if we do not learn how to control or minimise our distracting thoughts, they will continue without limit. The mind will just keep generating various thoughts and concepts. As a result, tension will build up inside us and we will feel stressed.

Although there are no limits to our ideas and thoughts, there are limits to what we can actually achieve, in terms of the time and energy available to us. As we said before, when we physically age, there are many things we are no longer able to do. Yet the mind may still want something

that requires a physical effort beyond our capabilities. This only makes us feel frustrated.

The time that we invest in meditation practice is a way of taking care of ourselves, and of making our lives as happy and satisfied as possible. While we cannot completely stop distracting thoughts and indulging in outer pleasures, we still need to keep our distracting thoughts in check. We need to familiarise ourselves with experiencing inner peace and happiness, rather than just outer happiness, which depends upon on us creating and meeting particular external conditions.

Essentially, meditation is a means of training the mind to follow positive habits. Of course, when we practice meditation, we should not forget about our material needs. It is wrong to think that one should give up one's job, studies, or other responsibilities just to do meditation. We have to be realistic about our situation. Our happiness depends not only on creating the right internal conditions, but also the right outer conditions.

It is beneficial for us to direct our efforts on working hard and making money to meet our outer needs, while also making sure that the mind is not completely preoccupied with these external things. By recalling that happiness is the most important thing in our lives we can feel more at peace, at ease with ourselves.

So, while we are pursuing material achievements in day-to-day life, we need to also ask ourselves: "Am I happy? How do I really feel?". If we discover that we do not feel happy and at peace then, even if we are materially doing extremely well, we need to take stock. Of course, if you have a family and children, perhaps they are benefiting from your material achievements. But what is the benefit to you personally?

This is why we need to practise meditation and create the causes for our inner peace and happiness. The main cause of inner happiness is calming and controlling the mind. In simple terms, it's about working within ourselves, trying to get rid of unwanted states of mind and cultivating peace and happiness.

It is especially good for us to see early in life, when we are very young, that to be truly happy we must satisfy both our inner spiritual needs, and our outer material needs. This makes your life more fulfilling. If you do well externally or financially, then whenever an opportunity arises for you to enjoy yourself socially or take part in activities with other people, you are able to do these things. At other times, when there is nothing interesting happening around you, if you have a strong spiritual life,

you still know how to find pleasure and satisfaction, even if you live alone.

We can regard favourable external conditions as an 'outer friend', and the cultivation of a positive state of mind as an 'inner friend'. Both are equally important to our happiness. The benefits of meditation practice are not just theoretical, but very practical. You can see the practical benefits manifested in the lives of many people. Many people have found that, after they following meditation practice, they were able to change their outlook from one of suffering and sorrow into one of hope, meaning and even humour.

If the mind is completely calm and controlled, then external conditions will cause us less harm. For instance, if we suddenly become very rich, our wealth will not bring us extra worry or stress if our mind is calm.

On the other hand, if the mind is not calm, wealth can often bring us more harm than good. Instead of bringing contentment, the wealth may just make us greedier. We may feel that the wealth we have is not enough. It is even possible that we felt more satisfied with our lives before becoming wealthy than afterwards, when the satisfaction and contentment were no longer there. Becoming wealthy may completely disturb one's mind. We can even see many cases where wealth can suddenly change a person's personality.

However, with a calm mind, if you achieve external success it can be a further source of happiness for you. It can even be a cause for you to increase your inner qualities such as love and compassion - for example, by enabling you to practise generosity and help those in need. So when we say that 'money doesn't buy happiness', we mean that simply having more money to spend doesn't guarantee happiness and satisfaction. True happiness and satisfaction depends on having a calm, controlled mind.

Our time is nearly up. We will just do five minutes breathing meditation. Then, after this, we will finish with our usual chanting of the Buddha's mantra seven times.

To begin the meditation, recall what we've just discussed about the purpose of meditation practice - to control and calm the mind. Keeping this in mind, check your sitting posture, making sure that the body is fully relaxed. Then check the mind, making sure it is not distracted by external thoughts and is residing fully within you. Having done this, begin the breathing meditation, in which you simply focus the mind on the in-breath and out-breath.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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