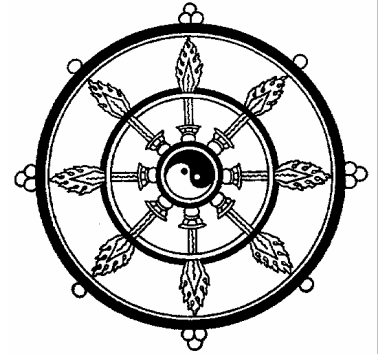


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

འཇིགས་མེད་ཀྱི་མཚན་མོའི་ཆོ་འཕྲིུག་ལོ།



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As usual, we will begin with the breathing meditation for a few minutes. Make yourself comfortable in a sitting posture, relaxing your body.

Then recall the advice of the famous master, Atisha, who said that whenever we are in a crowd, we should discipline our speech, but whenever we are alone, we need to discipline or check the mind. Therefore, what we must do here as we sit in this meditation posture is to examine the mind.

Meditation practice is a means of bringing us what we seek in life - more peace and happiness. Through meditation practice, we can create the causes of peace and happiness by working inwardly and making some inner changes.

Bringing about a calm mind is the best way to find happiness. We have to recognise how, when the mind is completely calm and brought under our control, we can experience a sense of peace and happiness flowing within us.

As we have just said, whenever we engage in meditation practice, our primary focus should be the mind. We have to check the mind. By simply observing the mind, we can gain some knowledge, a sense of discriminating wisdom about our own state of mind.

For example, we can see that some states of mind are positive and creative, and bring an experience of peace and relaxation, which is pleasurable. On the other hand, however, we can recognise other states of mind that have the opposite effect - they can be very disturbing and bring about an imbalance in our emotions. Too much of these negative states of mind can even affect our physical health, to the point where we cannot find physical rest and feel stress and tension in the body.

The moment we place our focus on the mind and try to observe it, we can see how it continuously generates thoughts that can be divided into two broad categories - positive, beneficial thoughts, and negative, harmful ones. Therefore it is clear that what we should be doing in our meditation practice is trying to diminish the negative states of mind, and trying to develop the positive ones.

When we engage in meditation practice and observe the mind, we need to see whether it is under our control, or whether it is controlled by some other force, like a distracting thought. If the mind is under the influence of a distracting or negative thought, we need to try and overcome it. The two main tools we should apply in the

meditation practice are mindfulness and alertness.

Mindfulness is a mental factor that does not forget the positive (meditation) object, whereas alertness is a mental factor that checks or 'spies' on the mind. If we remain very alert in our meditation practice, we can recognise and monitor any negative state of mind arising within us. Then, if we apply mindfulness, we can overcome the arising of a negative thought by directing the mind onto the positive (meditation) object.

If we direct our focus inward, we can see that we have both positive and negative forces within us. The negative force causes us to lose control of the mind and of our actions. The positive force enables us to gain control over the mind, and thus control over our actions. This is the essential purpose of practising meditation.

Not only in meditation practice but also in day-to-day life, we can see the benefits of trying to continually check the mind and adjust its direction whenever we feel it is necessary. Through meditation practice, we try to break the mind's negative habits because they serve as an ongoing source of problems and confusion for us. We are also trying to develop positive habits or energies within the mind, because the more we develop such thoughts, the more lasting and stable will be peace and happiness we experience.

Now, we will just do the few minutes' breathing meditation. As said before, sit in the meditation posture, making sure your back is straight. Most importantly, make sure you feel very comfortable and relaxed. Then, try to get rid of all distracting thoughts, so that the mind is brought fully inwards, and is fully stabilised within.

Next, we begin this breathing meditation practice, focusing the mind on the in-breath and out-breath. (*Pause for meditation.*)

Now, we will continue the teaching on the text *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*, verse 101, which reads:

As soon as we have placed ourselves into their realm
May the guards of the hells come to see us as gurus.
May the weapons of torture they hold turn to flowers;
May all harm be stilled - peace and happiness grow.

In the previous verse, we learned about the courage or spirit possessed by Bodhisattvas. These noble beings, who possess unbiased compassion for all beings, have so much courage that they are happy to take rebirth in the hell realms and be reborn in the hot hell realms, if they see that this would benefit even a single being.

This verse is a continuation of the meaning that emerged in the previous verse. Basically, the Bodhisattvas show us what we are capable of doing if we were able to generate enough courage and determination to help and serve other beings.

Even if you think the idea of a hell realm is far fetched, consider the kinds of suffering and problems that exist in this world. In certain parts of the world, people are caught up in epidemics of disease, are dying of starvation, or suffer a lack of freedom. To relieve the suffering of people caught up in such situations, many young people have volunteered to go overseas and help these people out of their suffering.

Most of these young people are from developed countries, and are effectively sacrificing their comfort and their luxuries when they leave to live a poor country. To be able to go to these poor countries and live and work there, these young people often have to finance themselves. Once there, they have to live like the rest of the population: they have to live, eat and drink like everyone else, often at great risk to their health and their lives.

So committed are these young people to working for the poor, the diseased, and the suffering – despite the many personal sacrifices involved – that they must have prayed or made a strong resolution in the past or in a previous life that they would one day find the courage to be of benefit to other beings in need.

We can see an example of this kind of prayer or resolution in the previous verse, where it says that Bodhisattvas pray to be reborn in the hell realms if they can benefit any being there. Once they are born there, according to the verse above, they pray that the guardians of these realms will regard them (the Bodhisattvas or noble beings) as a spiritual guide. They pray that the beings there may be free from holding harmful thoughts towards others, and that their minds may be completely calm and compassionate towards others.

The verse also says: "May the weapons of torture they hold turn to flowers". These 'weapons' refer to whatever means the guards of hell use to torture the beings there – may all these turn into a rain of flowers and into other things that would bring peace and joy to the beings there. Noble beings even make a prayer that may all the beings in the hell realms eventually achieve the ultimate spiritual goal of complete enlightenment.

What we can learn here is the extent of the actions we could perform if we had a Bodhisattva's courage and spirit. We could relieve so much suffering in the world, the suffering of other beings. However, if we lack the Bodhisattva's courage and spirit, all we can do is stand back and watch the suffering of other beings and feel sorry for them.

The main cause of Bodhisattvas being able to achieve what they want – that is, being of service and benefiting other beings – is their courage, determination, and strong motivation. This implies that even achieving our own

goals in this life for our own benefit depends on our level of motivation, courage and determination.

Regardless of the size of the goal we are trying to achieve, to reach it we need to maintain our motivation and determination. We can therefore see the importance of applying this advice to achieving anything we wish for in our lives.

We will leave the teaching here. Now we'll chant the Buddha's mantra. Once again, we'll sit in the meditation posture, getting rid of all distracting thoughts, and bringing the mind inwards. Then, as we chant the mantra, we make sure that the mind is focused only on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYA SOHA

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