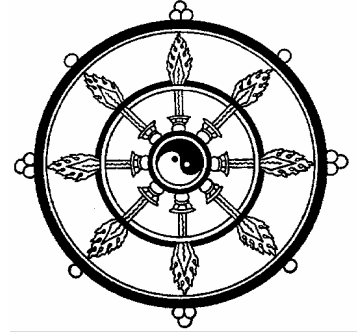


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

འདྲེན་སྐྱོད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



29 November 2000

Just begin with a few minutes breathing meditation. First, make sure you feel comfortable and your body is fully relaxed and then try to sit in the meditation posture. Regardless of the length of time that you are doing meditation practice for, sitting in the correct physical posture is very important. Therefore, when you begin the meditation practice, try to spend some time getting the physical posture right. The next thing is to then correct your mental frame of mind, which means getting rid of all the distracting thoughts and letting your mind fully rest or stabilise within.

Try to understand that meditation practice is about bringing our mind under control and calming it. On the other hand, it is also to prevent our mind from being overpowered and overruled by any negative states of mind that we call 'mental delusions' or 'afflictive emotions'. Whatever form of meditation practice you are doing, the primary focus is to direct the mind on the given object or topic of the meditation. This helps distant the mind from all the afflictions or negative states—like a neurotic way of thinking. We should be trying to build some sort of positive habit within our mind.

Of course, during meditation practice we should make absolutely sure our mind is fully focused on the object of meditation. Make sure that it's not just a part of the mind that's on the object while another part is preoccupied with something else. Rather than your attention having a 50/50 focus, try to focus the mind completely and single-pointedly on the object. The way of focusing on the object is not like the way we use our eyes and visual consciousness to look at perceived objects and forms, where there is a gap between the perceiver and the perceived objects. In meditation, rather than there being a distance or gap between the object and your subjective mind-body, you're trying to conduct the meditation in such a way that there is no object and no subjective mind—that your mind and the object are one. Try to completely dissolve your mind into the object. Bearing these things in mind, we can now begin this breathing meditation.

Pause for meditation.

Really, what meditation is all about is building a positive habit and pattern within our mind.

To do meditation properly and also for the practice to actually benefit our life, we need to gain some understanding of our own mind, of what is happening within it. We think that the continuous or the unending problems we face in life, one after another, are due to some external reasons and causes and conditions. However, when we look, we see that the real cause is in fact our mind. We can recognise that our mind has made the problems or the difficulties we face something very real and serious.

If we focus and watch our mind, we can understand that all our problems are mainly created by our mind. We can see

that it's always undergoing changes and that we continuously generate various types of thoughts. If we check, there are certain thoughts which, whenever they preoccupy us, result in us immediately becoming very disturbed, unhappy, sad, or feeling hurt. We need to recognise that whatever unhappy feeling or emotion we are experiencing is because of this particular thought in our mind.

The closer you look into the detail of that thought, we'll find that it is due to certain objects and conditions or memories of certain objects or events in one's life. It's because of a particular thought that right now we feel very sad, disturbed or unhappy. Sometimes we feel that we have no confidence, no capacity or energy, because this particular thought has consumed all our energy. You feel that while this thought is in your mind, no matter what you do, you can't enjoy life. Even though there might very good friends around, they cannot help you. They are of no use. Even if right in front of you is the most delicious food, you can't even taste it. Even if you try to just sit and do nothing, you can't rest. Or you try to go out somewhere, but this thought is still with you, you can't find peace. When we look closely, it's obvious that a particular type of mind can have a detrimental effect on our feelings and our life.

On the other hand, if you could remove this disturbing state of mind or thought, your feeling could be completely different. You can then have peace and happiness, regardless of whatever you do—whether you're enjoying a meal or just going for a walk. Wherever you are you can have peace and happiness within yourself and feel positive doing anything. When we recognise that our own problems or the misery we are undergoing is a direct outcome of this particular state of mind it becomes clear that we have to counteract or get rid of it—somehow we have to throw it away.

What does this mean? It means getting rid of, or forgetting, whatever objects, events or disturbing thoughts arise. It is so clear that the only way to overcome this is to get rid of these thoughts. However, instead of breaking our thought pattern, on the contrary we always continue with whatever thought or memory arises. We keep on going and our problem grows and the negative effects on us become even bigger. Try to trace the cause of any enormous emotional problem you are undergoing, even though it seems so serious and so big that it feels as if can't be overcome, that it keeps coming back. Perhaps, as far as the outer conditions are concerned, it could be traced back to just one minor object or very minor thing that happened in your life. However, the fact that it now has become so serious, so big, from the initial thought of the object or whatever happened, is because you keep on building and projecting more and more onto the problem. From this, we can see that if we do not check our mind, it can create and bring enormous

problems in our life.

Meditation practice requires us to correct our mental attitude or way of thinking, and also to bring about some changes within our mind. The reason we are trying to apply the meditation practice directly to our own mind, is to bring some change or to transform our life situation. We have to transform our mind because, as said before, most of the time the nature of any problem we undergo is related to our own mind. It is something to do with the type of feelings and emotions we experience during our life. Overcoming such problems is mainly related to our mind. Working on our own mind, and modifying it is the most effective way. Trying to apply external means is not going to be so effective.

Of course, changing our mind and way of thinking is not always an easy thing to do. It's not easy to break our habitual patterns. It is difficult to even break a negative habit we may have in our actions. But, of course, there is no reason for us to give up our motivation or determination to change our life situation or our mind. Think of Shantideva, the great and famous Indian Master, who said that there is nothing which can't become overcome, or which won't become easy, if we become familiar with it. For instance, in the past just hearing the name of a certain person might have been frightening, but now that person is so loveable to you that without them you can't even enjoy yourself. What this is saying is, generally speaking, that the basic nature of our mind is very flexible, it's not something completely rigid, something you can't change. It doesn't matter how bad the negative habit that we may have in our mind or in our life, we have to realize that it is possible to change. There is a way to change.

Even if we think in terms of achieving the goal of whatever task we may undertake in life, the most important factor in achieving the goal is our motivation and determination. You've got to have a strong determination to see the end result of the task. With that determination, then of course you put in the effort. So as you put in effort, depending on how much closer you are getting to the goal or how quickly you can achieve goal, it all depends on the amount you put in. When we talk of engaging in meditation practice as a means of bringing some major changes in one's life—and we're talking here about a change in our mental attitude or in our daily life—we're doing so because we recognize that there are certain ways of thinking and of doing things which have a habit of creating problems for ourselves and others, like a pattern of always bringing instability into one's life or of losing control of emotions.

Even if we may think the challenge ahead is really very hard and difficult because of something ingrained in our mind and our actions, as said before the most important factor is always to maintain determination to put in the effort, no matter how long it takes. If we make effort on a very consistent basis, eventually there will be a time where we can find that suddenly it is not hard to break such a habit. As a result of that, when one achieves a goal in terms of breaking such negative habits in one's mind or actions, once achieved, it brings some satisfaction. It's something to feel positive about. We can then become very optimistic about bringing about even further change, even a complete transformation of our mind. With this kind of outlook, then it's possible to make a consistent effort towards bringing about change. We can see how important and beneficial it is in meditation practice to overcome negative states of mind and habits. Then through this, as we can achieve more

peace and happiness in our own personal life, then we are in a better position to be able to benefit and to make contributions of peace and happiness, toward other beings.

There's not much time to go over the text, the commentary on this *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*, however just before we finish if anyone has a question maybe one or two questions are welcome.

Question: *When my mind becomes very still in single-pointed meditation, I get a fright because my mind is not used to the stillness.*

Answer: Geshe-la said he's not sure whether the word 'fright' is the right word. You are talking about your experience, which results from your mind when your mind is single-pointedly on the object, not on your breath, and inwardly you feel so peaceful. But you say that because normally don't find such peace, it gives a bit of fright to your mind which is used to distractions. Geshe-la thinks maybe the word could be 'excitement', or 'too overjoyed'-it's a form of distraction but it is a very joyful one. Geshe-la says that maybe because it's joyful, it's alright. Of course, after feeling that, then you should try to return the mind to the object, back to the breath. So maybe you can either recognize that as a very positive sign of your meditations, because the strange feeling you are having confirms that you are achieving some peace you don't find on other occasions. Therefore, such an experience can be even further reason to continue with this meditation.

Follow-on question: *Could I visualise sending the joy out to others?*

Yes, you could switch to the meditation of 'giving'. This peace and joy that you have achieved in meditation, if it's good if you, rather than becoming attached to it and it becoming something just for yourself, you should do the 'giving meditation'. Here, you try to send your joy to all the other living beings. That is a very beneficial practice.

Besides that, it could also be a strange feeling which, as you said, can distract or pause your meditation practice. As you said, it's possible that such a feeling can be like suddenly being woken from a very deep and pleasant sleep by a noise or whatever, and giving you a bit of a shock. It is possible in meditation practice that joy can be induced, particularly when you focus your mind very hard on a single object, and as you say, your mind completely settles on it. But when the amount of joy raises, then it can wake you up and distract you from the meditation practice.

So we'll finish the teaching here, by chanting of Buddha's mantra. So again try to sit in the correct posture, and relax your mind and body. Then, as we begin the chanting, try to keep the mental focus on the mantra, without allowing any distractions to occur.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

Transcribed from the tapes by Gabrielle Thomson

Edited by Dianne McDonald

Edit checked by Sandup Tsering

Edited Version

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