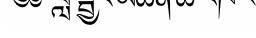
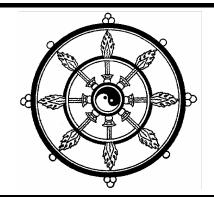
Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons" A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga Translated by Sandup Tsering







7 March 2001

We will do a short breathing meditation first. Please adopt the meditation posture that is most suitable and comfortable for you, one in which your body is fully relaxed.

We will appreciate our meditation practice more if we see it as being worthwhile and beneficial. If we consider the benefits of meditation practice, firstly, it brings our mental energy and focus within us. When all the mind's energy is focused within us and we utilise such a mind to do any action, then the result of that action will be productive and satisfying.

Conversely, when we check the mind, we may see that it is distracted and lacking focus. Even if there is some focus, it is not very strong. If our mind is full of many thoughts of different objects, then the force or focus of the mind is scattered, divided among various things. Therefore, we are not able to give our full attention to whatever actions we undertake, with the result that such actions are weak in terms of producing a result.

The word for 'meditate' in Tibetan (gom) means to get used to something. Meditating means getting used to positive mental habits, building positive ways of thinking. When we meditate, we try to bring about some change within the mind, because we have recognised certain things in the mind that disturb us, are hard to cope with, and are very painful.

Through meditation practice, we can develop more understanding of the mind and the way it works. For instance, we can recognise obsessive desire as being an immediate source of restlessness, dissatisfaction, and unhappiness; it prevents us from focusing our attention on what we should be doing. In meditation practice, we can also realise the cause of that desire - for instance, a desirable object that always preoccupies the mind.

Therefore, we have to try and find a different object, one that does not arouse desire or attachment. Instead of letting the mind be preoccupied with the desirable object, through making an effort in meditation practice, we direct the mind to an object of non-attachment. Meditating means getting the mind used to that object of non-attachment. We will see the results of meditation in our own experience as the mind begins to rest on the meditation object - the intensity of the desire we had before will begin to diminish. In this way, you will find that it is not hard to stop desire.

Likewise, if the source of your problem is strong anger or hatred, then you have do a meditation that focuses on an object of non-hatred. The meditation you do must

directly counteract the problem of anger. Or, if our cause of our problem is not having enough faith in our spiritual teachers and the objects of refuge, then we have to increase our faith in these spiritual objects of refuge. To do this, we have to familiarise the mind with those topics and objects that enable us to develop faith in the objects of refuge.

If we understand the benefits of meditation practice well, then whenever we confront a sudden problem or emotional disturbance - like strong anger, desire, jealousy, or whatever - we know that we don't have to live with that problem, that there is a way to solve it. By utilising our own wisdom and intelligence, we all these problems in our mind through meditation.

Having reviewed a few of the benefits of meditation, we will begin the breathing meditation. After you sit in a meditation posture, try and fully rest the mind inward by slowly removing all outgoing or distracting thoughts. Then, you can begin the actual breathing meditation in which, rather than letting the mind wander out after external objects, you try to discipline it by fixing it on the in-breath and out-breath. (Pause for meditation.)

We will now continue our discussion on the text, The Wheel of Sharp Weapons. We are up to Verse 105. In the last teaching, we quoted the first part of this verse, which we will read again:

O mind, understand that the topics discussed here Are interdependent phenomena all; For things must rely on dependent arising To have an existence - they cannot stand alone.

In this verse, the text is asking us to understand all phenomena, all objects of knowledge, as being dependent arisings.

We have already studied the self-cherishing mind within us, which strongly cherishes the self, one person, above all other beings. We briefly discussed this wrong view of self-grasping of a person, a view that misconceives the ultimate reality or true nature of oneself as a person. Here, the text is saying that oneself as a person and all other phenomena are dependent arisings, in the sense that they exist in dependence upon other phenomena.

When we say that all things are dependent arisings, this implies that they do not exist independently, from their own side. Understanding everything as dependent arisings is a powerful way of understanding that all objects of knowledge, all things, are empty of inherent existence.

In fact, the ultimate truth of any object of knowledge,

anything you may wish to take into account, is that it is empty of inherent existence. However, we don't develop such an understanding as a purely intellectual pursuit; rather, this knowledge should give us a strong incentive to apply Dharma practice in our life.

Using the reasoning of dependent arising, we can think about the things we desire and the things we don't want, in other words, our happiness or suffering. In fact, all the things we want to experience and things we want to avoid are merely dependent arisings. They do not exist, they do not occur naturally, by their own accord. Rather, all these things have eventuated in dependence upon other phenomena, which are the contributing causes. All phenomena have contributing causes.

There is a clear message here that if we want to achieve happiness, the only way is do this is by working to create the causes. Likewise, to avoid suffering, we have to work to avoid its causes. You have to feel a sense of responsibility that you are only one who can create these causes. It does not rest with any other being.

If you are aware of this truth – that everything is a result of dependent arising – it is a good basis for you to understand that you have to make an effort to create the causes of your future happiness. Something doesn't happen or not happen because we wish for it. Rather, it happens in dependence upon us meeting the right causes and conditions.

Having an understanding of emptiness based on the reasoning of dependent arising is very important, because these two concepts – emptiness and dependent arising – support each other. Whenever we say the word "emptiness", some understanding of dependent arising should arise at the same time – that all things including ourselves are the outcome of dependent arising.

It is said that even saying the word "emptiness" is very beneficial. If you read any of the sutras, such as the Diamond Cutter Sutra, you will see that there is enormous benefit in just saying the word "emptiness" to others or to ourselves.

When we understand that the ultimate reality or truth of a particular object is its emptiness of inherent existence, at the same time we will understand the truth of dependent arising of that phenomenon. Likewise, when we think of an object as being a dependent arising, then this knowledge will automatically lead us to realise the emptiness of that same object.

We can sit in meditation and, with the mind fully drawn inward, think about the question: "What is the ultimate reality of my own self, of this 'I'?" What is the nature of this 'I', which we feel resides deep down within us, and which is what we refer to when we say "I go" and "I sit", or identify with strongly whenever we hear our name called, the 'I' that responds. How does this 'I' exist in reality?

As said before, this 'I' is a dependent phenomenon, a dependent arising. It is dependent arising because the existence of that thing depends on a collection of various causes and conditions; its existence depends upon its parts. Anything that depends on a coming together of various causes and conditions, or on its parts, is a

dependent arising. Therefore, if a thing is a result of dependent arising, it lacks independent existence by way of lacking its own nature or character.

If we examine the 'I' or the self as a person as an object knowledge, we do not need to prove the existence of one as a person, because the fact that 'I' exist is obvious. The question is: "How do 'I' exist?" If we say that the 'I' exists as a dependent arising, it is clear that it doesn't exist as an independent entity, inherently, from its own side.

The next step in this reasoning process is to observe how the 'I' exists in our own experience. It is said that the realisation of the emptiness of the self, or the 'I' is something we have to develop based on personal experience. In other words, we do not just have to theoretically understand things as being empty of inherent existence, but we also have to use knowledge from our own experience to abandon this perception of 'I' as having an independent, inherent existence.

We need to observe the way this 'I' exists in our own experience. Regardless of any theoretical knowledge we may possess regarding this topic, we need to examine how we experience this 'I', how it appears to our own mind. Then we will notice that when this 'I' appears to the mind, it seems to have its own independent existence. The 'I' doesn't seem to be a dependent phenomenon; rather, it seems to exist in its own right. We apprehend the 'I' as seeming to exist from its own side, independently. This apprehension of the 'I' as having inherent existence is called the 'self-grasping' of a person, and is a misconception or wrong view.

Why? Because we are apprehending an 'I' that in fact does not exist. There is no such thing as an inherently existing 'I'. Yet our mind strongly apprehends that 'I'. This sense of 'I' within us is the 'I' to which we are strongly attached, which we apprehend strongly as existing inherently. However, in reality, as we said the 'I' does not exist inherently, but is a result of dependent arising. It is something that is designated upon the parts of our body, or the aggregates. The aggregates are the causes and conditions that constitute our human life. We must begin to recognise that the self-grasping of this 'I' of the person is a misconception or wrong view. If we can overcome this wrong view, we can see its effect in terms of all the other types of delusion such as desire, anger and so on, which act as a motivation for us to carry out the mundane actions that bind us to this round of suffering, or cyclic existence.

We have to realise the importance of doing this meditation, because it is said that without abandoning this self-grasping of a person, there is no way for us to achieve lasting happiness.

That's all for the teaching tonight. We will chant the Buddha's mantra, again sitting in a meditation posture with the mind calm and free from all outer distractions. Then, we use the mind to focus on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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