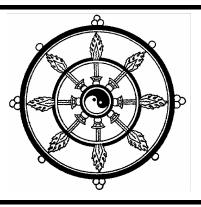
Dharmarakshita's "*The* Wheel *of* Sharp Weapons" A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga Translated by Sandup Tsering

৩৩ ব্রাঁষ্ট্রন কর্মন দ্বাঁন শো



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As usual, we will first do a few minutes breathing meditation. Sit with a straight back, and make yourself comfortable.

Try to stabilise the mind fully within, forgetting about any objects that you find attractive or unattractive, real or imaginary. Try, for these few moments, to get rid of all objects from your mind. If we just let the mind *be* and settle within, we will experience inner peace and tranquillity as a result of getting rid of thoughts of outer objects. So, after choosing the right posture, try to experience this inner peace and tranquillity.

Even though we can momentarily stabilise the mind by preventing our thoughts from going outwards, we find that our mind won't sit still for long. It's always looking for an object to occupy it. So, instead of letting the mind go out after external objects, in this meditation practice we try to use the incoming and outgoing breath as the object of the mind, disciplining the mind to just sit on this object.

Unlike other objects, the breath is without shape, without colour, and without form. It is also something very close to us. Therefore, the in-breath and out-breath is a very effective object for the mind to focus on. We will do this meditation for a few minutes. (*Pause for meditation.*)

When we engage in meditation practice, we introduce the mind to a specific object to contemplate and reflect upon. We will always find the breathing meditation practice to be a positive experience for us, something relaxing that will bring immediate relief, especially if there is a problem in our mind. One of the main causes of problems in the mind is the sudden arising of recurring thoughts to which we have become habituated. When we engage in this meditation practice, we are breaking the habitual thought pattern that brings problems and restlessness to the mind.

If we investigate the mind, we find that we possess a state of mind that is neurotic and ignorant, yet we are habituated to it.

The objective of every action we undertake is to achieve more happiness, more satisfaction, and to reduce our problems. However, if we think about the outcome of our actions in terms of getting closer to our desired goals, then as Shantideva, the renowned Indian master said, let alone getting closer to achieving our ultimate goals in life, we do not even get closer to achieving our temporary goals.

The cause that deprives us of finding even some

immediate happiness and satisfaction is the negative or neurotic state of mind that we can identify when we examine the mind very closely. If we look closely at this state of mind with intelligent wisdom, we see that it is indeed the major cause of our suffering, something that is always deceiving and misleading us.

If we need to be more specific about what this negative state of mind is, we can single out different aspects of it, such as desire and hatred.

Generally, the destructive results of hatred are apparent to us. However, if we closely examine the desire that we always carry around with us, we can see that it's insidious. It is not easy for us to identify this emotion as being destructive; rather, it appears to us to be beneficial and creative. Desire is a permanent trouble-maker in our life. Whatever we perceive through the mind of desire seems to be meaningful, appealing and beneficial. In reality, when we are overpowered by desire, we are in danger of losing any opportunity of finding satisfaction and happiness. In the long term, desire is the most destructive and harmful force within us.

When someone sees desire as a negative force, and embarks on the path to overcome it, it's like they are waking up from a long sleep to a completely new and happy life. Everything is meaningful – they feel content and satisfied with everything they find in their life. On the other hand, under the influence of desire, whatever we find in life does not make us feel content; rather, it merely drives us on to go after some different object. So, when we are overpowered by desire, we will never find any happiness.

The direction we take in our life depends on the state of mind we habitually rely upon. If we see the mind as the driving force of our life, we have to be careful about the state of mind we entrust our future life to. If we ask ourselves, should we entrust our future to the mind of intelligent wisdom or to the mind influenced by desire or hatred, we can see that the latter will take us in the wrong direction. Why? In an earlier teaching, we discussed how desire and hatred are examples of 'afflictive' states of mind, which are incorrect states of mind in the sense that what this mind perceives does not align with reality. For example, the way desire perceives its object doesn't accord with the reality of the object. Therefore, we should try to lean in the direction of the mind of intelligent wisdom.

We've got about 15 minutes left. Geshe-la was wondering whether anyone has a question.

(Question here from a student about the meaning of desire.)

A: To clarify the meaning of 'desire' as we are using it here, the word desire in Tibetan (*do chag*) has a very specific meaning. It does not just mean desire in the general sense of desiring for anything good or bad, or whatever. Here, desire is categorised as one of the afflictive emotions, one of the mental factors. The way we generate desire is that first, we have the thought of possessing, of wanting an object that we find attractive or appealing. So, we are talking about desire in the sense of coveting an object because it appears attractive to your mind.

In the context of afflictive emotions, 'desire' is the mind that wants to possess a particular object, because it has exaggerated the object's beauty or some other quality, to a degree that does not accord with the actual reality of the object. When you feel anger or hatred, in contrast, you have a strong ill-feeling towards an object because your mind superimposes on that object a quality of ugliness, and you see it as something you dislike. So, when we talk of desire as an afflictive emotion, we mean it has this element of perceiving the object with a quality of beauty or whatever that is beyond the actual reality of that object.

We can see how, depending on your perception at the time, the same object would look attractive one moment, when you feel strong desire for it, and unattractive and unappealing the next moment, when you generate anger or hatred towards it. Whether an object appears attractive or ugly to us is something that is totally superimposed or projected by the mind.

For example, the way you feel about your partner (in a relationship) could fluctuate within a moment – depending on your perception or mood at the time, that same person could appear pleasant one moment and unpleasant the next, changing from someone you desire to someone you hate.

When we use the word 'desire' here, we mean an afflictive emotion. The reason you desire that object is that your mind has exaggerated its qualities and attractiveness. If the object were already beautiful, you would add even more beauty to it, so you would feel very strong desire for that object. Or, if the object were not beautiful, you would project beauty onto it, so that it will appear attractive to you and you would desire it. This is the sort of desire we are talking about – an afflictive emotion that is very destructive, very harmful.

On the other hand, we also use terms such as 'desire for liberation', desire to achieve liberation from cyclic existence. In this context, the object of your desire is the state of liberation, which is a visual form that cannot attract your mind in the same way as a physical, beautiful object can. Because the state of liberation is a realistic goal you can achieve, the desire to achieve it is not an afflictive emotion.

We can also talk of the desire to help other beings, to benefit society, something that even His Holiness the Dalai Lama says is a valid desire. So it's good that someone has brought up the question of what this word means, because we have to be very careful and specific when we talk about desire in a similar context to hatred (i.e. an afflictive emotion), as being something harmful. We should be clear about the meaning of desire in this context.

That's all the teaching for tonight. As usual, we'll chant the Buddha's mantra seven times. Could you again try to relax and sit in the proper meditation posture, removing all distracting thoughts. Then try to focus the mind fully on the sound of the mantra as we chant it.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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