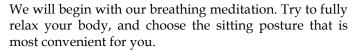
Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons" A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga Translated by Sandup Tsering





2 May 2001



After adopting the right sitting posture, we need to ensure that our mind is completely resting within. To do this, we try to empty the mind of all thoughts of external, distracting objects.

Before beginning the actual meditation, our mind should be one hundred percent at rest within us. Then we can begin the meditation and, instead of letting the mind drift once again towards external objects, we place it on the incoming and outgoing breath. As much as possible, try to 'sit' the mind on the breath by preventing it from drifting towards any other object.

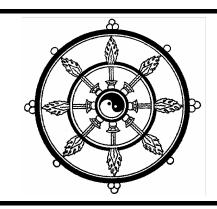
If we integrate meditation practice into our daily life, it will bring many benefits. The main benefit is in calming our mind, finding within us a state of mind that is peaceful, calm and relaxed. The importance of meditation lies in the mental peace, happiness, stability, and true knowledge it brings to the mind.

We can understand the importance of having a stable and peaceful mind by examining our own experience. No matter how good our outer conditions are - for instance, having delicious food to eat - whether we actually enjoy the taste of the food or not has to do with our state of mind at the time we eat it. Whether we find the food 'yummy' is not merely a question of the quality of the food or who made the food. Rather, it is the mind that plays a principle role in determining our experience - whether we find the taste of food pleasant or not, or whether or not we enjoy the sound of pleasant music, it is all related to the mind.

If our mind is strongly disturbed by anger, then no matter what we do, even if we are eating good food, we cannot enjoy its taste. Likewise, if our mind has strong craving or desire for an object and is obsessed by that object, it is as if all our sense consciousnesses are closed for instance, our hearing or ear sense consciousness becomes effectively deaf.

If we check up in our mind, we will see how important it is to always have mental peace and happiness. What we haven't taken seriously until now is how to bring about mental peace and happiness, how to sustain it, and the factors that deprive us of mental peace and happiness. When we ask ourselves these questions, we can see the importance of knowing one's own mind, one's own self.

Meditation is in fact the practice of focusing on one's mind, examining or watching one's mind and one's own



self. While we may have a great knowledge of the outside world - in fact we may feel so knowledgeable that we easily find fault with other people - when we think of our own self and our own mind, we will find that we do not have a true measure of our own self, in terms of the positive and negative deeds we do, or in terms of our habitually positive or negative states of mind.

Therefore, if we wish to develop ourselves and change our thoughts and actions, first we need to fully understand our current thoughts and actions. We need to learn how to discriminate between positive and negative thoughts and deeds. Normally, we make no effort to identify and acknowledge any flaws in our way of thinking or our actions. Even if we possess many faults, we have this misconception that we don't have those faults. We need to see the contradiction between what we seek in our life on the one hand, and the actions and attitudes we manifest on the other.

We all equally seek peace, happiness, and positive qualities, but do not want to experience negative things, or to possess any faults. If we watch our mind closely, we can identify the positive and negative mental habits or patterns that we have built up, that our mind is used to. If we habitually feel restless, in a state of dissatisfaction and unease, this indicates that our mind is used to negative ways of thinking. Negative states of mind bring harm and dissatisfaction to ourselves and to others. At the same time, we can also find within us a positive type of mind that has the potential to bring peace and happiness to ourselves and others.

As we just discussed, it's not just a matter of gaining knowledge about one's mind and actions, and what to do to improve them. One also has to develop a sense of responsibility. After understanding the changes one needs to make, one must take appropriate action. No one else can do it for you.

As much as possible, from your side, try to always have the right mental attitude and do the right actions. As much as possible try to be a good person, acting on the best knowledge you have of yourself at the time. Just by watching your own thoughts and actions, you can develop a good sense of discrimination between right and wrong thoughts and actions. Through this process of self-awareness and self-examination, you can see the difference between how you were beforehand, and how you are now, after having eliminated old negative habits and established new positive habits in your personality.

When you have true self-awareness and a clear understanding of yourself, you will also have a better understanding of other beings. When you see someone with a personality problem, you will be able to see why that problem is there – because of some negative state of mind. For example, a person whose mind is used to anger will always get angry very quickly. Likewise, a person whose mind is used to desire or lust will always be trapped into mentally or physically pursuing the object of desire.

The purpose of this exercise of knowing one's self is to learn how to do the right thing from your own side. Every action and thought you generate is not predetermined or conditioned by your outer situation. For example, if you are faced with an angry person you have to ask yourself, 'Why should I respond with anger? If I always give way to anger it will destroy my peace of mind.' Try to understand this and put it into practice.

If you use your meditation practice to develop an understanding of your own mind, you will gain enormous benefits. You will come to know the various states of the mind. By knowing this, you will be more skilful in handling the various states of mind and controlling emotions as they arise. For instance, you know how easy it is for the emotion of anger to arise if you are faced with someone directing anger at you. Or, vice versa, if you show anger to someone, it is easy for him or her to respond with anger. It's not something that happens with a stranger or an enemy. If you show anger to those close to you, like your close friend or your children, they can easily respond with anger.

Attachment, on the other hand, can cause us to suffer because we may show attachment to someone who does *not* respond to us. In the long run, attachment can be a greater source of suffering.

Whatever meditation or spiritual practice we follow, the aim is to develop an understanding of ourselves so that we can correct our faulty thoughts or deeds. It is important that we apply these spiritual teachings to our thoughts and actions. Whatever spiritual teaching or religion we follow, they all have the potential to benefit us, because they all focus on the aim of producing a good human being.

Conversely, if you do not apply the teachings to correct your ways of thinking and your daily actions, then no matter how much you study and how much time you spend following a spiritual tradition, it will not transform your mind. If someone suffering from attachment or anger does not apply the teachings to overcoming those problems, then the teachings or meditations will be of no benefit to that person.

It is even possible that such a person will find fault with the actual teachings. However, it is because that person has not applied the teachings to their own thoughts and actions that they have not benefited. Eventually, such a person may even generate a wrong view of the spiritual teachings and question their validity by saying that the teachings have nothing to offer anyone in terms of solving their problems. However, if we apply the teachings and put them into practice, we will enjoy the benefits. Obviously, the more one decreases the negative states of mind, such as desire or anger, through one's practice, the more one will increase peace and happiness in one's life. Thus, applying the spiritual teachings to overcoming all our negative states of mind is essential for us to find peace and happiness in our own lives, and also to bring peace and happiness within our family and our immediate community. For our family to live together in peace and harmony it requires us each to maintain a peaceful atmosphere within us, free of all hostility and strong attachment. So, try to understand that this practice of meditation is not just a matter of wanting to learn about some interesting spiritual tradition or training. Most importantly, we follow a spiritual teaching because we see that it is of immediate benefit in our daily life.

Geshe-la said that he did not plan to discuss all of these issues, but once he started, it just happened! He says that, even though he may be sitting on a high throne, he never feels that he is higher than the people who come to listen to his teachings. Rather, his attitude to everyone here is that we are all part of one family. Therefore, he uses this opportunity to say whatever he believes will be beneficial and gives teachings with the attitude of one friend or family member to another. He tries to discuss whatever issue he thinks is pertinent and beneficial to share with you.

Now we will chant the Buddha's mantra. As at the beginning of the session we choose the correct sitting posture, relax the body and then calm the mind by overcoming outer distractions. Then, as we chant, we focus the mind on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

Transcribed from tape by Gaye Lewis-Radcliffe Edited by Mary-Lou Considine Checked by Llysse Velez Edited Version

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