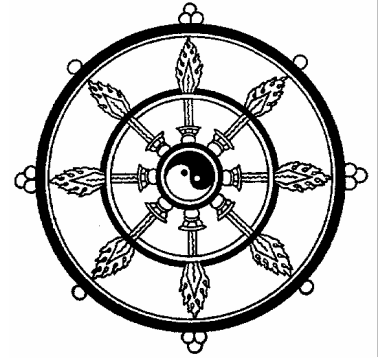


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by The Venerable Tenzin Dongak

འཇིགས་མེད་ཀྱི་རྒྱུ་རྐྱེན་གྱི་ལྷན་སྐྱེད་ལོ་ལོ་



13 June 2001

First, we will meditate on the coming and going of the breath. As usual, please sit in a relaxed manner.

What are we actually trying to do when we meditate? Normally, our mind goes out to all kinds of wrong and mistaken objects. So, instead of letting it wander off to all kinds of mistaken objects, we have to bring the mind home. We have to train the mind to focus inwardly on beneficial and spiritual objects, and accustom it to stay in that way.

In other words, we have to habituate the mind to stay focused inwardly, rather than letting it be distracted by mistaken and wrong objects. This is the meaning of meditation. Meditation means to accustom one's mind to virtuous and beneficial states.

When we meditate we try to straighten out our twisted minds. At the moment, the mind is bent and twisted, and one needs to straighten it out. Also we are trying to achieve the bliss of mental and physical pliancy. At present both our mind and body are heavy and difficult to control. Mental and physical pliancy is the opposite of that.

If we try to make the mind quiet and direct it to something, it is quite difficult to do. Through meditation, we can make the mind subtler, achieve mental pliancy, and the bliss induced by this pliancy.

When we keep the mind focused inwardly on virtuous and beneficial objects, this brings happiness and bliss to the mind, something that everybody wants.

At present disturbing states of mind will arise if we encounter the various disturbing objects. However, when we have attained the bliss that comes with mental and physical pliancy, we can have our mind under our control, focused inwardly. At times, of course, we will meet with objects of our desire, objects of anger, and so forth. But, if our mind is well controlled, then meeting with these objects won't affect us, because we will be able to control what is called "mistaken conception", one of the main causes for delusions to arise.

Normally, the mind is continually distracted towards the outside, being blown around like a leaf or a piece of paper in the wind. What we have to do is to bring the mind back home - to focus it inwardly and to try and keep it single-pointedly focused inward.

Now we will try to focus single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. (*Pause for meditation.*) Now please arise from your deep meditation!

It is important to meditate every day. Whether one lives a happy life, or experiences a lot of suffering and problems is completely within one's own hands. We always talk about human rights, saying that everybody is equal and that everybody has equal rights. Similarly, everybody has the right to be happy, as well as the ability and the power to make themselves happy. It just depends on whether you

take this responsibility into your own hands or not.

It is important to have the self-confidence to be able to say: "I am able to change my mind, I am able to have a happy mind." If you don't have that kind of confidence, and you don't have a happy mind, then you won't experience happiness. Your outer expression will be depressed and will make those around you depressed, because your state of mind influences the state of mind of those around you. It is very important to have a happy mind and not to be upset when things goes wrong. Even though on the outside things may not be going so well, one will have a happy mental state.

As well as having the self-confidence to be able to say: "I am able to live a more happy life", one also has to be concerned about others. We can have a positive influence on others by smiling and by being happy, which will make those around us happy also. This is very important. If we have this state of mind and meditate daily, this will be beneficial.

Geshe-la says he's giving this advice because he thinks that maybe it will be beneficial for you. He says it is important for us to take care of each other and to be kind to each other. If we see that somebody is depressed, then we try to console them and try to make them happier. If we live in this way, automatically our own life will also become happier.

Our normal way of doing things is that we usually try to get away from those people who are close to us and who have been kind to us, and try to get closer to people who are well outside our home and family environment, and this brings confusion into our lives. That's not the way to do it. Actually, we should try to be kind as possible to those people who are close to us and live around us and have been kind to us. We should try to help them and console them when they have problems.

Geshe-la says it is time to do one verse from the text. It says:

When our bodies are charred in a horrible nightmare
By the world-ending flames of a stellar explosion,
Although this ordeal is not actually happening
We nevertheless fell great terror and scream.

As mentioned previously, even though all phenomena are empty of inherent existence, cause and effect still exist conventionally. Similarly, even though all phenomena are empty of inherent existence, conventionally, sentient beings still experience various kinds of pain and suffering. Even though the pain and suffering are empty of inherent existence, to the mind perceiving them, they appear truly existent. And because the beings believes in this true appearance they experience the various sufferings of the hell realms.

Geshe-la uses the example of somebody having gone to sleep, and dreaming that his clothes and body are on fire. Even though it is only a dream, and is not a valid experience, to the person who is dreaming it will appear

completely real. The person will get a great fright and think: "Oh no, I'm going to be horribly burned!" and then will try to smother the flames on their body. Similarly, in reality, even though the sufferings we experience are empty of inherent existence, because we believe in their real appearance, we experience suffering.

The sufferings we experience in the lower realms are empty of inherent existence, they don't exist from their own side, but have been created through causes and conditions, through accumulating negative karma in the past. When one takes rebirth in those realms, one has to experience those results and is not able to stop those sufferings. One will experience those sufferings even though everything is empty of inherent existence, because cause and effect still apply. Therefore, because we fear intense suffering – such as being burned alive – we must cease all actions that would cause us to experience such a result.

The causes to experience those sufferings are non-virtuous karmic actions – it is very important to abandon non-virtue. Lama Tsong Khapa said that if one wants to practise Dharma, one has to abandon non-virtuous states of mind and generate positive and virtuous states of mind.

For example, we have to abandon harmful intent and ill-will, and try to generate a positive attitude and compassion towards other people, and wishing to benefit them. When we listen to Dharma teachings, we should think about them and contemplate them. Having thought about them and contemplated them, we should meditate on those teachings. Through that process, we can manage to subdue the mind, and transform it into something more virtuous, beneficial and positive.

Lama Tsong Khapa's advice to abandon non-virtuous minds and to generate virtuous minds is related to abandoning the ten non-virtuous actions – three actions of body, four actions of speech, and three actions of mind.

If we can abandon the attitude of wanting to kill somebody or something, if we can abandon the attitude of wanting to steal, and if we can abandon the attitude of wanting to commit adultery and sexual misconduct, then we will have purified the three negative actions of the body. Of the three doors of body, speech, and mind, it is very good if one can purify the negative physical actions of killing, stealing and sexual misconduct. These actions were initially induced by a negative motivation, the desire to do those actions, so we have to try to abandon the negative motivation of wanting to engage in those actions, and then stop doing them completely.

If we are able to purify the negative actions of our speech – lying, divisive speech, harsh speech, and idle gossip – we will have purified the second door of speech. If we are then able to purify our mind from covetousness, ill-will and wrong views, we will have completely purified all our three doors.

It is a universally accepted truth that if somebody can abandon the ten negative actions, that person is generally universally regarded as a good person. This is common to all the major religions. There may a slight variation in the detail, but basically all major religions have a version of what we call the ten non-virtuous actions.

If we look around at the world today, how do most problems come about? They come about because people don't have control of their actions of body, speech, and mind. All the troubles we observe in the world today occur because people engage in harmful actions of body and

speech, and because they have strong delusions within their mind. We don't have the clairvoyance to see how problems will be generated in future, and we don't know why they happened in the past. However, at this time, we can observe that problems come about in the world because of sentient beings' negative actions of body, speech, and mind.

Therefore, it is important that one pays attention to the actions of one's own body, speech, and mind, and that one practises introspection and awareness. One must try to be aware of one's own actions of body, speech, and mind and try to purify and avoid all harmful actions.

We have time for couple of questions. You have to ask the questions!

Student: It seems that as soon as one has purified a non-virtuous state of mind immediately another one takes its place. Is there even an end to it?

Answer: Geshe-la says that to hope that these things will have an end is difficult, because as long as we haven't opposed the main cause for our problems – ignorance – then the distractions will just go on. Like, in the morning perhaps we are able to purify some negative karma, but by the evening we will have created more negative karma (or the other way around). This is how we live, and we will continue to live like this until we have purified our mind of ignorance.

It is like grass. If we cut the grass in autumn, but leave the roots in the ground, it will grow again in spring, and will do this year after year, after year. Only when we take out the roots will the grass stop growing altogether. In the same way, as long as we haven't purified our mind of ignorance, then negative states of mind will arise all the time. But if you take away the ignorance, which is the base from which other negative states of mind arise, the other states of mind cannot arise.

Another example is the five senses: hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and touching. If you take away the body, there would be no way for the eye, ear, nose, and so forth to exist, because the body is their base. If you take away the base, they can't exist. In the same way, if you take away ignorance, the other negative states of the mind can't exist. So, with regards to the end of the distracted mind, that will come when we have opposed ignorance in the mind.

When we achieve the state of what is called an 'Arhat' or 'Foe-Destroyer', our mind will be completely purified of all disturbing states. The attainment of Arhatship and the purification of all disturbing states of mind are simultaneous; they go hand in hand. However, even before attaining Arhatship, one must attain the 'path of seeing', when one realises selflessness directly, and this in itself is a very, very beneficial and powerful state.

Until we achieve the path of seeing, whether we want it or not, we will keep creating contaminated karma that keeps us in cyclic existence. That is because until we reach the path of seeing we are under the control of ignorance.

Until we achieve the path of seeing, we will be completely under the control of self-grasping. This is the form of ignorance that is the base for all the other delusions. At present we are pressed down upon by this ignorance and all the disturbing states of mind which are generated by ignorance because when we are under the control of self-grasping, we are also under the control of all the other delusions. Geshe-la says that it is like something holding us down without us having any control over it. But when we attain the path of seeing, we will become more powerful

than the delusions. That's why a being who has attained the path of seeing is called an 'Arya' or superior being. One becomes the superior of the delusions.

Geshe-la says that sometimes you will hear about this person called a superior being, in contrast to an ordinary being. The superior being is regarded as better than an ordinary being who hasn't realised selflessness directly. However, Geshe-la says he likes to think about it differently. He thinks of that person as being superior to the delusions, because he or she has gained mastery over his or her self-grasping, and is therefore not controlled any more by his or her delusions. That is why the person is called a superior being, because he or she is superior to the delusions.

Before one attains superiority to the delusions, one is under their control. For all human beings, whether they want it or not, delusions will arise because all the causes and conditions for delusions to arise are all there – the closeness to objects of anger and attachment, the wrong conception that is one of the causes for delusion to arise, and the karmic seeds in the mind that are the other cause for delusions to arise. When these causes and conditions come together, whether the person wants it or not, delusions will arise without any control. This happens to all ordinary beings.

However, if one attains the path of seeing and becomes more powerful than one's delusions, then when one finally attains Arhatship or the state of Foe-Destroyer, one will have completely pacified all disturbing states of mind. If we practise diligently, this is how it is possible to attain that state in the future.

Even at the level we are meditating now, we can pacify some disturbing states of the mind momentarily during our meditation. Sometimes the delusions are pacified, only to arise again. Still, it is important that even now we try to lessen the strong delusions we have, even though we are not able to eliminate them completely at the moment. Further, if we are able to meditate on calm abiding, we will experience the peace and the bliss that comes from calming the disturbing concepts in the mind. In other words, when we say "calm abiding", the calm is referring to the calming down of the conceptual thoughts. If one is able to do that, one will experience the bliss and the peace that comes from calming the conceptual mind.

When we say "calm abiding", the word calm refers to the calming down of the conceptual thoughts and "abiding" refers to being able to abide single-pointedly on the object of our meditation. Even though it is difficult, we still have to try to lessen our disturbing states of mind and delusions. One shouldn't have the attitude of giving up, by saying that it is too difficult, or that it takes too long. One should have great strength of mind, great confidence. In fact, the more disturbing states and delusions arise in the mind, the more courage one should generate, and the more self-confidence.

If two countries were at war, and if one side gives up and says: "We are weaker than them, there is nothing we can do", then that country will definitely be defeated. This is not what normally happens. Normally the people of the country will say: "No matter what they do, and no matter how much hardship and difficulty they give us, I will not give up, I will definitely prevail, I will not come out of this as a victim". It is important that we, too, have this attitude with regards to our delusions. Geshe-la says that sometimes people come up to him and say: "I have meditated for three years and still no great change has happened in my mind.

Aren't three years enough to change my mind?"

Of course there should be a difference between how we treat the inner enemy and how we treat the outer enemy. To the inner enemy – the disturbing states of the mind and the delusions – we do not show any mercy or forgiveness. As to the outer enemy, if our lives are threatened, of course we have to take care that we don't get harmed, but we should not try to prevent ourselves being harmed by harming the other person. But to the inner enemy (the delusions and the disturbing states of the mind), the more we harm them, the better it is for us, because that is beneficial to our mind. One of the Kadampa Geshe said that whenever his delusions were active, he became more vigilant and alert, and whenever his delusions were more relaxed and sleeping, as if they had 'taken a holiday', then he could also relax and take a holiday.

Geshe-la says that sometimes it is very good to show confidence. He says there is a story he may have already told you, about when he was living Sarnath/Varanasi. There was a young Rinpoche there who liked Geshe-la very much. He was very young and small, and would go everywhere with Geshe-la.

One day they went to the market and – probably because, Geshe-la says, he doesn't understand the Indian language – an Indian shopkeeper said something insulting, The young Rinpoche whacked him! The shopkeeper grabbed the Rinpoche and many other Indians crowded around, getting very excited. The Rinpoche had a nice watch on his wrist and, because Indians usually don't have such nice watches, they wanted it. The situation could have gotten out of hand very easily. They could have been beaten up and the Rinpoche could have lost the watch. So, even though Geshe-la didn't have a knife under his robes, he put his hand under his robe, pretending he was about to pull out a knife. The Indians got scared and they all dispersed! So, Geshe-la says that sometimes it is good to appear self-confident. If he hadn't done that, he and the Rinpoche probably would have been beaten up and the boy would have also lost his watch.

As before, please try to bring your mind home, concentrating inwardly. Then, concentrating on the main mantra of Shakyamuni Buddha, we will recite it together.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

Transcribed from tape by Gaye Lewis Radcliffe

Edited by Mary-Lou Considine

Checked by Venerable Tenzin Dongak

Edited Version

© Tara Institute
