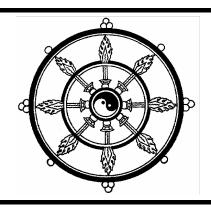
Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons" A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak







As usual, we can meditate while sitting comfortably and relaxed. After we relax physically, if our mind can also dwell in a relaxed manner within our body, that would be excellent. If we are able to remain with a relaxed body and mind, then even if other people are uptight and have an angry attitude towards us, it won't harm us.

To attain a relaxed mind, we have to work with it. If we don't exert some effort and engage in some practice, our mind won't just relax by itself. To make the mind more relaxed and stable, we have to subdue it, which is what we try to do when we meditate. What we are trying to do is to gain mastery of our mind, to gain control over it. Once we have subdued it, we will be able to experience pliancy, a more stable mind, greater clarity of mind, greater happiness, and so forth.

What do we mean when we say that we have to subdue our mind? We mean that at the present time, our mind is overwhelmed by delusions - the various disturbing thoughts and harmful emotions. Subduing the mind means to take care that it does not keep falling under the control of the disturbing thoughts and disturbing emotions. Once we have achieved that aim, we can say that we have subdued our mind.

When we are able to prevent our mind from falling under the control of the delusions and disturbing thoughts, it will become more stable and we will be able to keep the mind single-pointedly focused inwards. Then we will experience a special kind of happiness and bliss that is generated within the mind.

So now, instead of letting our mind be distracted toward outside objects, we will take control of it and bring the mind back home, focusing it inwards. First, we will remain for some time in a non-conceptual state. Then, when we find that the mind again tries to wander outside, we just focus it on the coming and going of the breath. [Pause for meditation] We can arise from the meditation.

It is very good to remember the benefits that one gets from practising meditation. In this case, the meditation on the coming and going of the breath has the power to make our physical body more supple, and helps us to attain what is called 'pliancy' of the body. What this means is that, at the present time, our body is polluted and quite uptight. From that come various sicknesses and experiences, like heaviness of the body and so forth. Through meditating on the coming and going of the breath, one can overcome that.

After having purified the energy winds within one's body and having attained physical pliancy, one can then attain mental pliancy. In this way, one attains the bliss of mental and physical pliancy.

Remember that the benefits that come from meditation are very useful. But for us to attain those benefits, it is very

important to work with our mind, not letting ourselves fall under its control.

Whenever we want to achieve something, we have to exert a certain effort. If you hadn't exerted a certain effort tonight, you wouldn't be here listening to the teachings. At an ordinary, worldly level, to achieve whatever we want, we have to exert a certain effort. Nothing comes about without exerting effort. If, instead of exerting effort, we just let our mind fall under the control of laziness, then since we are under the control of our mind, and our mind is under the control of laziness, we will be completely controlled by laziness. Then we won't achieve any of the aims we set out to accomplish.

Pliancy of body and mind refers to a state where the body and mind are very light and blissful, and can follow our commands very easily.

To live a happy life, one needs a happy mind. It is very important to have a happy, stable and clear mind. One also has to have a healthy body, which one takes care of as well as taking care of one's mind - one must abandon food and drink that harm one's physical health.

Our two most intimate and closest companions in life are our body and our mind. They are always with us. It would be very difficult for us to say that we are here, and our body is over there, or to say that my body is here, but my mind has gone over there. Wherever we go, we always will be accompanied by our body and mind. If we have a sick body, we won't feel so well and happy. If we have a depressed, unhappy and disturbed mind, we won't experience happiness. Therefore, since our body and mind are always inseparably with us, it is very important that we have a happy mind and a healthy body so that we can live a happy life.

The best thing one can do for oneself is to take good care of one's mind, to make sure that one has a healthy and happy mind. In the same way, one must take good care that one has a healthy body. On the basis of living a happy life with a happy mind and a healthy body, we will be able to have a positive influence on those around us, to more easily make them happy. One will exude positive energy. Also, if we have an unhealthy body, it is very difficult to benefit others. So those two points are very important to keep in mind.

Since it is so important to have a happy mind and a healthy body for one's happiness and since happiness is what we want, it is self-evident that we should abandon anything that harms our mind or our body.

So, we will go to the next verse in the text [The Wheel of *Sharp Weapons*], verse 113:

When we closely examine effects and their causes, We see that they both lack inherent existence -They cannot stand alone, either whole or apart,

Yet there seem to exist independently rising And falling events, which, in fact, are conditioned By various forces, components and parts. It is this very level on which we experience Birth and our death and whatever life brings. So please, in this world of appearances only, Let's always be sure what we do is of virtue And shun all those acts that would cause us great pain.

The other day we had the example of the sitar. We were saying that the sound of the sitar does not arise independently of the accumulation of its causes and conditions, but depending on the accumulation of the causes and conditions the result – sound – arises. But if we look for sound in any one of the causes, we won't find it – not in the strings, not in the body of the sitar, not in the hands playing it. Since sound is arising in dependence upon its causes and conditions, we say that sound is empty of inherent existence. Sound is neither a 'truly existing one' nor a 'truly existing many', because it is established in dependence on its parts.

Even though phenomena are empty of independent existence, conventionally they still exist. In this world of appearances, one still experiences happiness and one still experiences suffering, and in this world of appearances, happiness comes from virtue, and suffering comes from non-virtue. Therefore, it is important that one still tries to abandon negative karma and tries to accumulate virtue.

So, we go to the next verse:

When a vase has been filled by the dripping of water, The first drops themselves did not fill it alone; Nor was it made full by the last several drops. It was filled by an interdependent collection Of causes and forces that came all together - The water, the pourer, the vase and such things.

This is again an example to illustrate how results come about through the collection of causes and conditions. In this case, the full vase does not arise out of itself, and also it is not caused, for example, by one drop alone. We cannot pinpoint any one drop as being the drop that is solely responsible for filling the vase. But, as a collection, the drops are able to cause the filling of the vase. So, the full vase doesn't arise independently of its causes and conditions – such as the many drops, the vase, and so forth – but in dependence upon these.

One has to relate to one's own life this example of the vase being filled by an accumulation of drops. First of all, do not think that it is OK to create even small negative karma, thinking you have abandoned very heavy negative acts but that the small acts don't matter. It is very good to remember this example – that, even though one small act by itself might not be all that harmful, one small act after another will slowly, slowly bring about a very strong accumulation of negative karma, and the vase will fill.

The same applies for the other way around. One shouldn't think that only very great and very strong positive actions are worth doing, and that small positive acts are not worth doing. Again, that is a wrong attitude. In fact, one has to accumulate virtues little by little, piece by piece.

Everybody wants to attain happiness, and the happiness one wants to attain, as in the examples mentioned, doesn't arise independently of an accumulation of causes and conditions. Rather, one's happiness comes about through the accumulation of causes and conditions, and [the result

of] those causes and conditions doesn't come about all at once, again arising independently – all at once there is this big happiness – but one has to accumulate the causes and conditions one by one. Then, slowly after having worked for a long time, one can achieve one's aim.

Thinking in this way generates more confidence, strength of mind and enthusiasm. Geshe-la says he quite often advises people that it is very good to put aside a certain amount of money every week –put \$50 in the bank every week and, even though at the beginning it might not sound very much, once one has done this for a year, or for a few years, one will have accumulated quite a bit of money. It works like that in the ordinary world, and it is also works like that in dharma. Dharma happiness doesn't arise independently, or all at once, but has to be created through the accumulation of its causes and conditions.

We have time for a few questions.

Question: I am not sure about everybody wanting happiness. I think this is conditioned through society and that small children don't have that yearning for happiness.

Answer: Geshe-la says there is not the slightest doubt that people want happiness and don't want suffering. There's no need to state any kind of proof for that. Everybody has self-grasping and, with that, comes the wish for the self to be happy.

So, based upon the grasping at the 'I' or the self, we automatically generate like and dislike. We generate like for what appears to us as pleasant and desirable, and we generate dislike for what appears to us as undesirable and unpleasant. We can even observe this with small children – they want this, and they don't want that. So, we generate attachment towards the pleasurable appearances, and aversion towards the unpleasurable appearances. This is something that small children also have.

[Questioner repeats same point as above regarding the conditioning.]

But Geshe-la just mentioned the children. Can you clarify that one? Geshe-la asks you to clarify.

[Questioner continues, asking whether or not there is a universal quality of happiness that exists without the definition being given to us by others, continuing that they had felt no inclination to be either happy or unhappy as a child.]

Geshe-la says that small children will have various experiences, without necessarily being able to give them a clearly defined name – small children will not necessarily say, "I am looking for happiness, and I am trying to avoid suffering" – however when they experience suffering, they will generate dislike for that.

A small child might see these flowers, and not know the name of the flowers. They will see the flowers but they will not say, "Oh, look, there is a camellia", because first they need to be informed that that's a camellia, but that doesn't mean that they don't see them.

If somebody doesn't tell you, "Oh, that person is such-and-such", or otherwise inform you that another person's name is so-and-so, you will not know that person's name. It is the same with this glass. First, somebody tells you, "Oh, that's a glass of water. That's what's called a glass, and in there, that's water". Then you know that, "What I'm seeing here, that's a glass, and inside there, there is water". So, that labelling process comes about through outer conditions.

In the same way, small children also experience various

feelings of happiness and suffering, and also generate like for happiness and dislike for suffering, but they are not able to really articulate that, or give the process they experience a name.

For example, if you take a child to a place where he or she likes very much to go, then he or she will be very happy, and laugh, and so forth. Of course, whether that is actual happiness is a different debate. A small child will cry if it is hungry – first the child is hungry and it cries, then it gets its milk, and then it is very content.

Is there some other question?

Question: Does ignorance get abandoned all at once, or through accumulation of causes and conditions as mentioned in the example?

Answer: The abandoning of ignorance comes about in stages. For example, one has to realise emptiness in order to overcome ignorance. That is first done on a conceptual level by way of a mental image. Then, through increasing that realisation, it becomes a direct, non-conceptual understanding. Further, through meditating on that again for some time, one can attain the state of arhatship, when one has completely abandoned ignorance. So there is a process.

Question: I would just like to clarify one thing. Cause and effect creates karma, and cause and effect is without inherent existence, yet it is the karma which survives our death, because it is the karma which will determine our rebirth into whatever realm. Could Geshe-la please elaborate on that for me?

Answer: It comes about through the accumulation of causes and conditions, conventionally in mere name; but saying that it exists conventionally in mere name doesn't mean to say that it is completely non-existent. What do you have to say to that?

Karma arises through the accumulation of causes and conditions. Our happiness arises through the accumulation of its causes and conditions, and also our suffering arises through the accumulation of its causes and conditions. Therefore, in dharma practice, what we try to do is to accumulate all the complete causes for happiness and increase them. If we try to lessen and finally completely eradicate all the causes for suffering, then that is the whole point of dharma practice.

So happiness comes about through the ripening of virtuous karma, so through the ripening of this virtuous karmic potential, then happiness can arise.

Questioner: I understand that. Perhaps I can simplify my question. Does karma survive death? If so, does it have inherent existence?

Answer: Actually, karma disintegrates in the very next moment of its existence, but it leaves or it plants on the mental continuum what we call a karmic potential, or a karmic seed. This karmic potential goes with the mind from this life to the next life. In a future life, that karmic potential has the possibility to create happiness or suffering through its ripening.

For example, in the case of killing, at first we will generate the motivation in our mind, wanting to kill the other person. At that moment, we accumulate or create what is called 'mental karma'. Then, through the force of that motivation, if we go and actually kill that other person through actions of our body, for example, we create the

actual karma of killing. That karma of killing leaves on our mental continuum a karmic seed or a karmic potential, and that karmic seed or karmic potential goes with our mental consciousness to the next life, where it then ripens in a suffering result.

As was explained before, we should bring the mind home, not letting it be distracted to outside objects, and then focusing single-pointedly inwards, we will recite the Shakyamuni Buddha mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

Transcribed from tapes by Gabrielle Thomson Edit 1: Ven. Tenzin Dongak Edit 2: Mary-Lou Considine Edit 3 & Check: Ven. Tenzin Dongak Edited Version

© Tara Institute