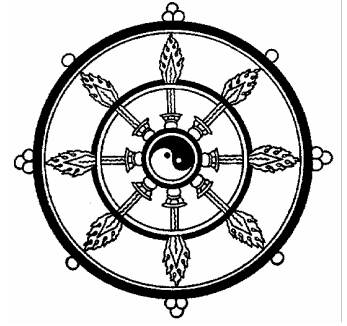


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

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འཇིགས་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



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So then we can practice a little bit of meditation. There was this Indian teacher Lobon Phawo who gave an example for the process of meditation. He said that subduing once mind is like taming a wild elephant with a hook and by tying it to a pillar with a rope. The elephant is our mind, which we tame by binding it to the pillar of the object of meditation with the rope of mindfulness and by using the hook of introspection. In India the elephant riders have iron hooks with which they can bang the elephant on the head and the elephant then does whatever they want.

If we meditate with the aid of mental introspection and mindfulness we can subdue our mind and attain single-pointed concentration. If at the beginning we bind our mind to the object of meditation with the help of mindfulness, then when our mind again starts to go away from the object of meditation with the help of mental introspection we can catch the mind and bring it back to the object of meditation.

The attainment of single-pointed concentration is based on the mental factor of mindfulness, which has the two characteristics of familiarity with the object and not forgetting the object, in this way fulfilling the function of preventing distraction from the object.

The mind has to be familiar with the object of meditation because it can't remember what it is not familiar with.

But then we have to also remember the object of meditation during our meditation. In this way mindfulness of the object of meditation will prevent our mind from getting distracted from that object.

If we bind our mind to the object of meditation with the help of mindfulness, then we can achieve single-pointedness of the mind. But here one shouldn't think that mindfulness itself would be concentration. Through keeping mindful of the object of meditation comes stability of mind. That stability of the mind is called concentration.

So when we attain the single-pointedness of mind, or single-pointed concentration, then we will receive various benefits. For example we will attain what is called mental and physical pliancy, which means that our mind and body will become very serviceable. One aspect of that is that our mind will be completely immovable, like Mount Meru, but at the same time the mind and body will be very light and blissful. That will arise through the force of one's single-pointed concentration. So now we can sit in a very relaxed manner and bring the mind home one hundred percent. Focus the mind one hundred percent on the inside, not allowing the mind to be distracted to the outside at all. And then for some time try to keep the mind in an empty, non-conceptual state'. When you find that the mind again tries to escape to the outside, then focus it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breathing. So we can meditate like that for a few minutes. *[Pause for meditation]*

There are great benefits arising from meditation. Ordinarily

our mind is distracted towards the outside and we are engaged in the pursuit of looking for happiness there. All our energies are concentrated on looking for happiness outside. But what happens is that through that our mental and physical happiness actually becomes less. And when our mental happiness and our physical happiness stops or lessens, then we won't experience any kind of happiness. Wherever we go or whatever we do, we will not be able to experience any kind of happiness. On the other hand, if we stop the continuous search for happiness on the outside, and if we lessen our grasping towards outer happiness and focus the mind more on the inside and practise single-pointed meditation, then through that some mental happiness will naturally arise within the mind. And then wherever one goes or whatever one does, one will be able to experience that inner happiness. Through meditation, inner happiness can arise very easily in the mind, and then that can be experienced wherever one goes, or whatever one does.

Now we go to the text *[The Wheel of Sharp Weapons]*, Verse 115:

It is precisely the same when we come to experience
Pleasure and pain: the results of our past.
Effects never come from the first causal actions,
Nor do they arise from the last several acts.
Both pleasure and pain come from interdependent
Collections of forces and causes combined.

As we also mentioned last Wednesday, happiness doesn't arise just out of itself and all at once. Happiness arises through the accumulation of causes and conditions. From the accumulation of causes and conditions, then the result arises. That proves that the result is dependent arising and that the result is empty of inherent existence. If the result would arise independently of causes and conditions, then the result would be inherently existent. But we can observe very easily that results arise only through the accumulation of causes and conditions, and therefore the results are not inherently existent. In the same way our happiness also arises through the accumulation of causes and conditions. And also as mentioned last time, happiness doesn't arise all at once. The causes and conditions won't come together all at once, but have to be accumulated piece-by-piece and part-by-part, as in the example of the vase, which gets filled by a succession of drops.

So one's own happiness arises through the accumulation of causes and conditions. While we are trying to accumulate those causes and conditions we will encounter conducive conditions as well as adverse conditions.

First of all, conducive conditions have to be accumulated and increased, and adverse conditions towards happiness have to be eliminated and purified, and whether the conducive conditions for happiness get accumulated or not is within one's own hand. During the accumulation of

conducive conditions for happiness, adverse conditions will come up. Wherever one goes, wherever one takes rebirth, adverse conditions will come up. It will be very difficult to completely reverse or fight off or avoid all adverse conditions. But what one has to do is to avoid letting one's mind get depressed by the adverse conditions. One shouldn't let one's mind be overcome by adverse conditions, but instead practise patience – the patience of being able to bear sufferings. Then through practising this patience of being able to bear suffering, one will be able to maintain enthusiasm, and keep one's strength of mind and courage, and won't become depressed and overcome by one's problems. So this is important.

So practising the patience of bearing sufferings is very important during our life. We will again and again experience adverse conditions. It happens in our life that we experience certain problems and immediately become overcome by them. As soon as we have dealt with them then another set of problems comes up, and again one is completely overcome by those problems. Since that's how it can be in life, then it becomes very important to practise this patience of being able to bear sufferings, which enables oneself not to be mentally overcome by one's problems, to be able to keep one's courage, strength of mind and enthusiasm. So the practice of this patience of being able to bear sufferings becomes very important.

So this Master, which we will call here just Lobon Phawo, he said that there is no benefit in being depressed because of the problems one is experiencing. It does not have the slightest benefit for getting rid of or overcoming the problems. In our life we experience various problems – physical problems, relationship problems or economic problems— so if we let our mind be overcome by those problems, and become depressed because of those various problems there is not the slightest benefit. Becoming depressed will not make those problems go away, and it will not help us to get out of those problems.

So actually if one is experiencing those various problems, then one should try to be like a truly brave person and think that the more problems one is experiencing, the greater the strength of mind one generates. So in being able to confront any kind of problem, have the attitude that one is able to deal with any kind of problem.

Geshe-la asks if there are any questions? If there is no question, then he'll continue with the text, otherwise you can ask a question - but a good question!

Question: I don't think anybody who's depressed wants to be depressed. It seems to me that saying that depression doesn't help the problem, doesn't make it go away makes absolute sense when I'm not depressed at the moment. But if I were, I don't know how much that would help me. So the question is, could Geshe-la then talk a little bit more perhaps about how we deal with depression?

Answer: At the time when you are depressed, it is up to yourself to get your mind up again. If you stay depressed, then there will not be the slightest benefit for you. It will not help you to overcome your problem. So it is a question also of applying wisdom, what is beneficial? When we just sit there and sort of think, "Oh I am feeling bad, I am so depressed, I have so many problems and I am this and I am that," what is the benefit? It will not benefit you in the slightest. It will not help you to overcome the problem. So for example, if you have physical problems, you can

analyse, "Is there an antidote, is there medicine or some cure for my sickness? In the case where there is a cure for my sickness, then there is not the slightest need, benefit or purpose to become upset or depressed. And in the case where we have a sickness, which cannot be cured by some cure or medicine, then also there is not the slightest benefit in becoming depressed and upset. If on top of having a physical sickness, you then let your mind get sick and upset, then you will be sick both mentally and physically. Some sick people, even though they have very heavy physical sickness, will still laugh and fool around and trade jokes and so forth. That is because even though physically they are sick, mentally they are able to stay happy.

Question: Geshe-la, the prevailing medical opinion is that depression is a biochemical condition, and the sufferer does not invite the depression. There are cases of clinical depression where none of the above outer conditions like relationship problems etc. apply, yet still they experience depression.

Answer: Depression can also come about through an imbalance in various physical substances in the body, through imbalances in the elements in the body. There is a relationship between the body and the mind; it is not like they are completely unrelated.

And we do, as you say, find that there are examples of people who have very strong depression without any obvious cause to have anything to be depressed about in this life. That can come about through an acquaintance with depression in past lives. For example, if in your past lives, you were depressed a lot, then through the habituation of mind, that can carry over in this life.

Like Shantideva mentioned in 'Entering the *Bodhisattva's Way of Life*', there is a certain kind of person who never seems able to complete anything they set out to do. Shantideva warns that one shouldn't leave actions incomplete, because if in this life we engage into various projects or plans but then don't complete them, which sets up a habit to become like that also in future lives. So if in this life we set up a habit of starting various jobs, works or projects, and then always leave them halfway through, that sets up a habit to also act like that in the future. So you are setting yourself up for never being successful in your future lives also, because you are establishing mental patterns, which carry over into the future lives.

In the same way as in this life we can establish mental patterns never to see a job through to the end which carry over into the future lives, mental patterns, such as depression, established in a past life can also carry over to this life.

We can also observe then that if one pair of parents has several children, those children will have different characters, predispositions, and so forth. So one of the children could have stronger desire. Another child or the brother or sister could be more predisposed towards anger. One of the children might be very harmonious with the parents, while the other child might always fight with the parents. So differences in character and mental patterns and habits were established in a past life and then carried over into this life.

We can observe already in small children that they have different predispositions, characters and mental patterns, and because they are small children, there wasn't really any time for them in this life to set up various mental patterns

and predispositions and characters and so forth. And the characters of the children and their mental patterns differ from the mental patterns and characters of their parents. For example, very loving and compassionate parents can give birth to a child who is very predisposed towards anger, and parents who are very predisposed towards violence and anger can give birth to a child who has very strong, loving and compassionate characteristics. In such a case those characteristics and mental patterns obviously don't come from the parents, and also there was no time for them to be established in this life. So they are mental patterns or habits, which were established in a past life and then carried over into this life.

Our father and mother were a substantial cause for our physical body. The fertilised ovum in the womb of the mother is a combination of the physical continuity of the father and the mother and the substantial cause for our physical form. We can also observe in our physical form a resemblance, sometimes strong, sometimes not so strong - towards our parents. But the substantial cause of our mental continuity doesn't lie within the father and the mother, didn't come from them, but lies in previous moments of our own mental. So therefore the mental makeup of the parents and children can be completely opposite, completely without any kind of a resemblance.

Could Geshe-la say something about patience in relationships with the opposite sex?

Answer: The meaning of patience is to have a happy and undisturbed mind. So the practise of patience in relationships is that if the other person does something harmful then you don't let your mind be affected. You don't let your mind become disturbed and affected by negative or harmful actions of the other person, and that becomes the practice of patience. If you let your mind get disturbed, then anger arises, and once anger arises in the mind, then there is no practise of patience.

If you let your mind get disturbed, then anger arises in the mind. Then you mentally exaggerate the situation in your mind. If you then reply in kind and get angry when the other person says something to you the situation gets completely exaggerated and what might have been just a small issue at the beginning will become something very, very big. That came about because you didn't practise patience in the first place. You let your mind become affected by the negative actions of the other person. You lost your mental peace, and you got angry, and then the situation got out of hand.

And then you each go to get your clubs and have a fight, after which you then sit together tending to each other's wounds, saying how sorry you are.

So if you keep your mind peaceful and unaffected by negative actions of the other person, then you won't get angry, and also within that peaceful state of mind, you will find some love and compassion for that other person. But if you lose that peaceful state of mind and get angry, then the wounds on the head come!

Question: How do I reverse years of negative mind?

Answer: Shantideva says first of all that there is nothing, which you can't accomplish if you put your mind to it and train in it. But because we have been accustomed to negative states of the mind for a long time, it will be very difficult to stop them all at once. But then it is not beneficial to say, "Oh I am somebody who is completely overcome by

negativity. I will never be able to overcome my negativity." That will not help you to improve your mind. You have to know that you definitely can change your mind and overcome its negative states, but it has to be done in small steps, step by step. Shantideva also said if at the beginning we start to practise patience with small problems and obstacles we can then increase the strength of our patience and of our mind and move on to bigger problems, and in this way gradually improve our patience and our ability to remain patient.

Some people, if they are so negative and uptight, can't even bear other people looking at them in even a slightly negative way. As soon as somebody looks at them with a little bit of a dark face, immediately they will think, "Oh, look at that person, he is angry with me" and then he will get angry in return. But if we practise patience at such times, thinking that it doesn't really affect you, then you won't get angry.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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