

Dharmarakshita's "*The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

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Let us think about what the great Tibetan Buddhist master Lama Tsong Khapa said: "if the mind is wholesome then all the grounds and paths are also wholesome. If the mind is unwholesome then the grounds and paths would be also unwholesome".

Essentially this quote shows how the quality of our mind effects our lives. There are some people who are naturally happy, calm and kind. Furthermore, due to their happy nature, their facial expressions and the way they speak, they always leave a good impression on others. They are always very prepared to help others, and use their own resources, knowledge and skills to do so. These are admirable qualities which are reflected in their thoughts and deeds. It shows that they have a good heart and a kind mind.

But we can also see that there are others, who by nature have a very negative influence, who are unhappy and confused in their outlook. And they, also by nature, leave a negative impression on others. They create such an influence due to their negative unwholesome mind. Lama Tsong Khapa is saying here that we should work to develop a good heart and a very wholesome state of mind. This can bring not only happiness and joy in our own life but also to others. With a good heart others around you can come closer to you; one is able to develop closer and better forms of relationships. But if we hold a negative state of mind then, as said before, not only does this make our own life miserable and unhappy, but it also causes misery to others and causes disharmony and distance in our relationships with them.

The main force which determines our attitude and conduct of body and speech is our mind. A good nature can be seen in positive mannerisms, like a facial gesture when conversing or showing love. We can acquire these positive mannerisms if we have a positive attitude within our mind. Therefore a good mind is important to cultivate because all our behaviour is the imprint or the manifestation of our mind. There is a close link between our mind and the actions we perform through our speech or through our body. We are responsible for what kind of actions we perform. For example, if we are not careful, even a minor fault in our actions of speech or body can be a cause to make others very unhappy. So if we want to change our actions into something beneficial to ourselves and to others, then it all depends on cultivating a good mind.

We have to think of the importance of cultivating and developing a good mind. If we consider our own life, it is difficult for us to live alone or to live without any friends. Therefore if we have to, if it is important for us

to have a friend in our life, then it is also important to know how to develop a good friendship. Upon examination, we find that the essence of developing a good friendship lies in our attitude and in our conduct through our body and speech towards the friend.

If we believe that we have the potential to develop this good mind and improve our way of conduct then we have to utilize that, we have to make use of that potential. Otherwise if we only say that we have this potential to show a good heart towards others, and we never actually put that into practise, then there are no benefits. We have to see that the purpose of the Dharma is to transform our attitude and our daily actions of body and speech.

When we talk about the mind which is positive, joyful, clear thinking and peaceful then we can all understand that it is something not only very essential, but it is also something we all want. As we think on this positive state of mind, we can see that it is very valuable and as precious as a jewel, a real inner treasure which can fulfil all our wishes.

On the other hand the negative state of mind is a very uncalm, disturbed state of mind which no-one wants. We would never want to be led by that state of mind. So if we do not want to be led by this negative state of mind then we should look into the causes - what is the main cause which brings about this negative state of mind within us.

The main cause of this negative state of mind being always present within us is that we keep generating uncontrolled thoughts. Gross thoughts - aimless and wandering thoughts in our mind. Therefore the first step to remove or to counteract the negative state of mind within us is to challenge and subdue these gross forms of wandering thoughts within us. The immediate cause for the wandering thought is its object, so therefore we practise a meditation where we focus the mind on a given object. Our mind is trained to familiarize itself with this positive object, so that all other objects which arouse unnecessary and disturbing thoughts become distant from our mind. In this way the meditation practice is also the practise of Dharma, in the sense that it directs us to engage in some wholesome or virtuous practice.

Whether we actually practise or not is our individual choice, but when we utilize our own reasoning and our own discriminating mind, then we can see that it is possible to counteract the negative state of mind. We can gain some idea of the skills and knowledge needed to

counteract this negative and unwanted state of mind. But of course when the time comes for us to do some actual practise then we always think of some excuse, saying that we became very dull minded or we have no time to practise. In fact, to see some result of what it is like to experience a more disciplined and calm mind, then it is not just enough to simply know how to control the mind, we have to apply all our knowledge into the actual practise.

So when we practise, when we actually put our knowledge and skills of training the mind into daily practise, then we can see the results which are within our own experience. As a result of our practice, we can see all the negative sides of the mind decreasing and the positive sides increasing. Our own experience is the test for the results of this practice.

The benefits of our practice are developing positive qualities within the mind, so naturally we will experience even more happiness and satisfaction within our lives. The cause of happiness is not only material, but most importantly it is our mental condition. So if we could create this mental condition, it would be very natural for us to feel satisfied especially if materially we have everything that is necessary for a comfortable life.

For example, if you are living by yourself in a room, some material comforts would be an advantage. If then, on top of these material advantages, your mind is also very calm then you will naturally feel a great sense of satisfaction and sense of happiness because there is no reason not to be happy.

This way of training of the mind is something extremely important to practise for all of us, because we are all the same in that our aim is to seek happiness in life. If our aim is to do this practice then to do it effectively, we need to find a knowledgeable guide.

Tonight we didn't do the usual meditation. However, we will chant the Buddha's mantra. So choose the right meditation posture and try to fully relax your body. As we mentioned earlier, try to get rid of all distracting thoughts so that the mind just rests within us. As we chant this mantra together concentrate the mind on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Editor's summary:

- Lama Tsong Khapa says that we should work to develop a good heart and a very wholesome state of mind. This brings not only happiness and joy in our own life but also to others. With a good heart others around you can come closer. If we hold a negative state of mind, not only does this make our own life miserable and unhappy, but it also causes misery to others and causes disharmony and distance in our relationships with others.

- We have to see that the purpose of the Dharma is to transform our attitude and our daily actions of body and speech.
- The main force which determines our attitude and conduct of body and speech is our mind. A good nature can be seen in positive mannerisms, like a facial gesture when conversing or showing love. We can acquire these positive mannerisms if we have a positive attitude within our mind.
- The main cause of this negative state of mind being always present within us is that we keep generating uncontrolled thoughts in our mind.
- The first step to remove or to counteract the negative state of mind within us is to challenge and subdue gross forms of wandering thoughts within us.
- The cause of happiness is not only material, but most importantly it is our mental condition.