
Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

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We shall do some breathing meditation together first. Choose the right posture, making sure that it is comfortable, and relax your body.

We need to remove all distracting thoughts of external objects and try to stabilise the mind fully inward. Our mind always needs an object to hold. So after having brought the mind inward we prevent it from wandering after external objects by placing the mind on the breath. We try to make that focus single-pointed by focusing only on the incoming and outgoing breath, thus stopping any other object from distracting our mind.

If we observe our daily thoughts, we can see that while it is very easy for our mind to think negatively, it is very difficult for us to think positively. In other words we have to put a lot of effort into directing our mind towards positive and more constructive ways of thinking. Directing our mind in a positive direction is like directing water uphill. Whereas directing our mind in a negative direction is like a habit - it requires no effort. We have no control over our own mind and it doesn't necessarily function according to our wishes.

When we want the mind to sit on a given object, it will not sit there. Or if we want the mind to be active in thinking about a certain subject that we are studying, it lacks the ability to function as we wish. Therefore through meditation we are gaining complete control over the mind. The objective of meditation is to tame the mind so that it functions as we wish.

We want to achieve control of the mind, because without this control our mind becomes restless. It doesn't stop wandering and it is never content. Just because we physically have nothing to do, or that we are resting does not necessarily mean that we are truly relaxed. It has to be more, because relaxation must come from within, and if it doesn't come from within then we don't feel a sense of proper relaxation. So from this point of view if we practise meditation effectively, it will calm our mind. We will experience a meditation state similar to the good feeling we experience when, after a hard days work, we feel very thirsty and someone offers us cool water. We will feel that sense of rest, and relaxation that we experience when we quench our thirst. Through meditation practice we achieve the same sort of mental calmness, where we automatically feel very peaceful and relaxed.

Whether or not meditation is relevant to us depends upon how much we understand our own mind. If we see in the mind both positive and negative influences, we can see that the negative influences need to be avoided and removed. Once we realise the advantages of removing this fault of the negative mind, we will see that the most effective means of achieving this is

meditation.

To meditate one needs to know how to practise, and also to understand the aims of one's practise very clearly. If we think of meditation as something we do to suppress all our thoughts then we have the wrong approach to meditation. We cannot achieve much if we practice by just preventing all thoughts without any clear knowledge of exactly what you are trying to achieve.

As we practise meditation our mind should brighten and widen in terms of its wishes and its ability to focus instead of becoming more dull and narrow. Our mind should become more spacious. Meditation also provides us with an opportunity to watch our thoughts very closely, and to try to minimise those thoughts that are unnecessary, or that are not leading us to any desired goal. These are the thoughts that appear when you lack control of your mind - thoughts such as daydreaming and fantasising about many various things that we hope for in the future.

By investigating our thoughts we may find that they are directed towards the future. We may be thinking that to change our life for the better, so many things have to be achieved. However if we investigate realistically and practically, then we can limit ourselves to the thought of seeing one goal that is achievable. We can also become very clear about how to go about achieving that goal. When we consider our thoughts in this way then, instead of feeling hopeless about the future, we can actually make some effort to try to achieve our goals.

By observing our thought stream in our daily experiences we can, in general, recognise that there are certain thoughts that have a pattern of always bringing unhappiness and spoiling our enjoyment. We also have states of mind and thoughts that are positive. Those positive thoughts motivate us to undertake actions that enable us to fulfil our desired goal in life.

As we develop more positive qualities within ourselves through meditation, we will be stronger and more courageous, and so be able to handle any outer situations that confront us. So our inner qualities and strength to find our potential - they become our unfailing friends, protectors and guides. They give us the energy to face any adverse situation, such as a business downturn, or losing a friend, or partner.

On the other hand, normally when people face such adverse conditions in their life, like losing a friend or partner, then they experience great suffering and deep sadness. For them losing a friend feels like they are losing all hope in life; because they have lost something that they feel they need to rely upon in their life.

Other people see their possessions as the most reliable

objects. When we place our hope on some outer objects then it is a great disaster if we lose that object. However if we find trust in something within ourselves, which gives us hope and a purpose in life, and which gives us safe directions in life, then whatever happens externally, we feel that there is still hope in life and some purpose in living.

What we are trying to achieve in meditation is to find and develop the inner skills and knowledge that we can use as the main source to guide our life and solve our problems.

That is all for tonight. As usual, we will recite the Buddha's mantra. Choose again the right posture, so that you feel comfortable and that your body is at rest. Then fully stabilise the mind inward, and as we begin the chanting, direct the mind onto the sound of the chanting.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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