
Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

4 September 1996

We will do some breathing meditation. First, choose the correct posture, with a straight back and relaxed body.

We adopt a meditation posture to gain control over our mind, because an uncontrolled mind creates dissatisfaction, confusion and uneasiness. If you do not control your mind, it will control you.

An uncontrolled mind is dominated by agitated thinking - all kinds of disturbing thoughts arise, creating unhappiness. With a clear understanding of the benefits of controlling the mind, we sit in this posture to discipline our body, and try to discipline the mind by removing distractions, allowing the mind to dwell within.

After our attention is brought inward, instead of following distracting thoughts, we focus the mind single-pointedly on the breath.

In meditation, our task is to clear the mind of mental delusions or useless thoughts. We can compare it to the sky during the day - when the sun appears very bright and clear. If our mind has fewer disturbing thoughts, it has more space, joy and peace and we can think more clearly. When our mind is clear and peaceful, when it is healthy whatever we decide to do, we will have the inner motivation and enthusiasm to do it with concentration and enjoyment. Thus we can benefit tremendously by purifying our mind.

We say that we are happy when we calm our mind; but we also say we are happy when our mind is distracted by outer objects. For example, when we meet the object of our desire, there is a sense of pleasure. While experiencing that pleasure, we can see our mind is not focused inward; it is overpowered by the object of desire.

If we compare the happiness we obtain through indulgence in outer objects with the happiness we experience through calming our mind, we see that 'inner' happiness is more stable and lasting than 'outer' happiness. When we investigate the conditions required for outer happiness, we see that it's not reliable - it turns into suffering as soon as the outer object or condition is lost.

We do not experience pleasure just because of desire; rather we experience it when desire is fulfilled by its outer object. So while desire - especially strong desire - can bring pleasure in the short-term, it can also bring suffering into our lives. For example, if you lose the object of your desire, the inward desire for the object doesn't go away. If your desire for the object is strong, the result is great misery and frustration.

On the other hand, if we investigate inner happiness, it is not subject to outer conditions, but is under our own

control. So it is up to us to maintain the conditions for inner happiness.

Meditation is the practice of controlling our mind to get rid of mental distractions. As said before, we can't find lasting happiness in outer objects; such satisfaction is only temporary. We can see from our own experience how an object that once brought joy to our mind can later on become a cause of suffering. For example, if you leave your partner after some dispute, the same person who you cherished in the past - and who always brought you joy, hope and strength whenever you thought of them - can cause you pain when you think about them after they have left you.

How can meditation help in this situation? Instead of becoming distracted by the problem, you can try to engage in meditation. You can stop thinking of that person, focusing your mind instead on meditation objects, trying to maintain this focus. If you do this consistently, the moment will come when your mind stays inwards. When you reach this level of mental control, you will see the benefit of meditation. The more disturbing thoughts you eliminate, the more peace and joy will arise within.

In the last teaching, we finished Verse 6, which says:

And thus the Bodhisattvas are likened to peacocks:
They live on delusions - those poisonous plants.
Transforming them into the essence of practice,
They thrive in the jungle of everyday life.
Whatever is presented they always accept,
While destroying the poison of clinging desire.

This verse likens Bodhisattvas to peacocks in the sense that Bodhisattvas live in the poisonous jungle of worldly existence, but know that these poisons can cause harm. Bodhisattvas utilise poisons - the mental delusions of worldly life as a way of fulfilling their spiritual goal. They are able to utilise adverse situations as favourable ones because they have no self-cherishing.

Ordinary beings like ourselves, when we find a luxurious place to live, become attached to it. Thus attachment serves as a source of suffering in our life.

On the other hand, a Bodhisattva would take advantage of such attachment to a luxurious home by using their own desire to increase their understanding of desire. They come to understand that desire binds all beings into a suffering existence. Therefore, whenever desire arises, a Bodhisattva immediately sees its faults, and thinks of using whatever they possess in order to liberate all beings from suffering. Thus Bodhisattvas can utilise all their possessions to fulfill the welfare of other beings. In

this way, possessions don't serve as a source of suffering for them.

When other delusions such as anger arise, even if we can't stop anger arising, we can, like the Bodhisattvas, utilise the opportunity to understand the nature of anger. For example, if anger is not controlled, it can bring detrimental consequences to our lives. Furthermore, if we are very skilful like a Bodhisattva, we can also use the object of our anger to cultivate tolerance.

The best and the easiest course of action is to prevent anger arising by fully understanding its shortcomings. When we generate anger, we know how disturbing and negative we feel, so we should make some effort to the practice of patience, instead of sustaining anger in our mind. We can try to focus on the benefits of practising patience, and on the downfalls of anger; we can even try to show compassion or empathy towards the object of our anger.

The purpose of practising patience or trying to minimise anger, desire and other delusions is to make sure that we enjoy inner peace and happiness, regardless of our outer conditions and possessions.

We will finish here tonight and, as usual, we will chant the Buddha's mantra. Take up the meditation posture and, like before, try to stabilise the mind inward and focus it on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

© *Tara Institute*