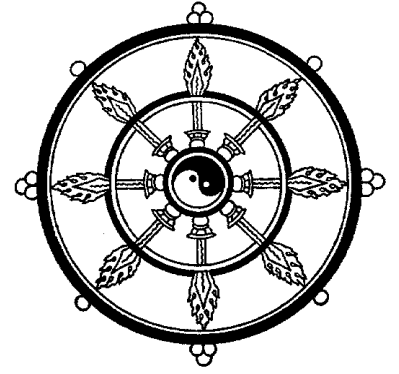


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# Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering



ཨོ ལྷོ་སྤྱོད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།

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We shall do some breathing meditation first. Choose the right sitting posture and try to fully relax the body.

Realise that the purpose of meditation is to calm our mind, and to gain control over it. If we look at our mind and try to find out why it lacks concentration, stability and discipline, we can see that it is because our mind is overpowered by various agitated thoughts. Therefore, in order to gain control of the mind, we have to let go of entertaining those unnecessary and influential thoughts.

To start the practice of controlling the mind, the most important thing to do first is to observe the mind closely. We can then see that the mind always races after unnecessary external objects. As we engage in meditation practice it is most important that we stop our mind from running or racing after those unnecessary objects. By removing these mental distractions, we find that our mind stays within us and we can start to train it. Having stabilised the mind inwards we can begin meditation. Here we will do breathing meditation, directing all our mental attention to the outgoing and incoming breath, making sure that the mind stays focussed on the breath rather than going towards any other object. So we will now do this meditation.

Our main desire is to find peace and happiness in our life. We have the ability to create the causes of peace and happiness ourselves. We can understand that the main source of all our suffering, discomfort and unhappiness is within ourselves. If we look within we can see how we feel - happy or unhappy, at ease or uneasy - all depends upon what sort of mind we have. Through our own intellect we can see that within us there are certain types of mind which, whenever they arise within us, always bring unease. These kinds of state of mind bring unhappiness. If we allow these states of mind to continue, then we can never free ourselves from the problem of unhappiness. Our experience of this unhappiness is almost the direct outcome of the state of our own mind.

For example, desire for another person can also be the cause of undergoing unhappiness when the desire is not fulfilled. Thinking or holding that object in our mind can be a cause of great suffering. Desire is the cause of our problem, and it arises whenever our mind thinks of that object. Our suffering is the cause of feeling unease within us from unwanted experiences. So, realising that these states of mind are not good for us, we need to be strongly motivated to get rid of them.

Meditation familiarises our mind with the right objects. The right object is one which can help minimise these desires. We need to choose an object which is opposite, or at least different, to the object of desire. Then we need to train our mind to sit in that object and become familiar with it. This is the way to transform our mind, so that it will not automatically run after the previously familiar object of desire. If we keep saying that we can't do this, and we aren't capable of achieving that, we undermine any progress we can make of bringing happiness into our lives.

We can remove and overcome these desires by training our mind, and making a deliberate effort to control it. We can stop it from running after an object of desire by focusing the mind on meditational objects, or indeed any other object. In this way we can solve the problems that result from uncontrolled anger, desire, and so forth.

The best thing we can do is to make use of our intellect and our own sense of discrimination; because it is said that as human beings we are gifted with some special self potential. Our knowledge is the best tool we can use in achieving all the things we want to achieve, and getting rid of the things we want to get rid of.

The answer to what brings happiness or suffering in life does not lie in the outer world. In fact it is said that the most important cause of our happiness or suffering is within ourselves. Our own mind can be the trouble maker. Imagine what we could achieve if we could recognise our mind as something positive and hold it as a treasure! Imagine how problems could be reduced.

Without counteracting the inner cause of suffering, which is the main cause of our suffering, we cannot achieve much from all our outward efforts. What we are saying here is that our mind is like the commander controlling our life and our actions.

Upon examination there are two types of mind - positive and negative. It is said that if all the actions we manifest through our speech and actions are negative, aggressive and harsh, this indicates the influence of the negative state of mind. Alternatively if we have a positive state of mind, it influences us in a wholesome quality in our speech and actions. In following meditation practice our main concern is our own mind, and our aim is to develop an understanding of our own mind and its relationship to our actions.

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In a short amount of time our speech can change from soft to coarse, or our facial expression can change from a smile to a frown. This is all due to the influence of our mind. If the negative state of mind is present in us then almost without any control, without any self discipline, all the negativities show in our actions as well - there is no choice. Such is the influence of the dominant force of our mind over our actions.

When there is a negative state of mind, then we act 'out of control' and do negative things. Through our meditation practice we can develop more of an understanding of our own reality, and then we can also understand other people's situations. This understanding encourages tolerance towards the negative way others behave towards us. For example, if you are living with a friend then it is natural that, sooner or later, their mind will be influenced by negative attitudes and they will show a different face and say negative things to you. So, when these things happen, instead of immediately retaliating, try to understand that their true situation is bothering them, and that is why their speech is harsh and their face is dark. That situation is not the right time to retaliate, especially if you are a friend. Instead, try to show sympathy and a more caring attitude towards your friend. At least try to remain stable by not retaliating and provoking the situation. This restraint is also beneficial for you, in that retaliation will not only lead to a worse situation, but will also lead to a loss of your temper and thus a loss of your inner peace.

The mind is most important, because it is the source of everything - all our feelings and experience. Even for two people living together, the satisfaction they find in their relationship depends on a large extent to their attitude to each other. If there is an attitude of true love and caring then that dramatically brings harmony into relationships. So whatever they do together is enjoyable, even sharing tea or a meal together.

As we follow the meditation practice, we can learn and take our mind into account as much as possible in order to explain any situation that we face in life. For example, if we become angry, we can try to think that the cause is not external but internal. Rather than letting the anger completely control us, we can focus our mind on the anger itself and ask why the anger has arisen, what is its nature and try to investigate it further. Focus the mind inward instead of focusing on the object that arouses anger. Such an analytical meditation is said to overcome anger and the anger can even disappear.

The key point of meditation practice is knowing your own mind. If we remember this when we meditate, we can make some progress and benefit from the practice.

We can now chant the Buddha's mantra for seven rounds. As before, you choose a comfortable posture and, without being distracted by outer objects, try to have the mind turned fully inward. As we begin the chanting just focus on the sound of the mantra.