

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

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

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In order to bring our mind within and stabilise it there we will practise breathing meditation for a short time.

Whenever we practise meditation, the first thing to do is choose a suitable sitting posture, making sure we are physically relaxed. Next, focus the mind inward, and in this meditation, reflect for a short time on our life in terms of what we individually want to achieve, and how we can contribute to others' lives and to society through knowing their needs. After identifying these goals, the next step is to see whether we have the potential or resources to fulfill those goals.

In our lives we can certainly see that we enjoy great freedom to do whatever we want. We have some free will, some power. But even if we are clear about what is best for us and best for others, why don't we achieve it? We must investigate the obstacles to achieving our goals, for instance, of finding genuine satisfaction and happiness. If we investigate thoroughly, we see that the main cause bringing unhappiness and confusion into our life is not something outside. Rather, it is within us - it is our mental delusions, an afflicted state of mind that continually arises. Upon investigation we can see that this afflicted state of mind is unruly, and only brings more disturbance and discomfort to the mind. When we experience it, no matter what situation we are in, we find ourselves unhappy.

Therefore, when you start meditation, you have to clearly identify the inner cause of unhappiness and restlessness. Then you can generate the strong motivation that you will now engage in meditation practice to combat that inner cause of unhappiness, the afflicted state of mind.

You can even say to yourself: "I won't fall under the influence of this afflicted mind, I won't let mental delusions rule my life, my emotions and actions." With such a strong determination to challenge this afflicted mind, you can begin the meditation practice.

In beginning meditation practice, try to remove from the mind all distractions caused by external objects, because these distractions are an obvious cause of discomfort. By removing gross external objects of distraction, you will experience some inner peace, which indicates that your mind is abiding within. Then you can start the breathing meditation. So now try to focus the mind on the breath without letting it wander to other objects. Try to focus single-pointedly on the incoming and outgoing of the breath as it passes through your nostrils.

We practise meditation to tame our mind, to gain control over the mind. If our mind is not under our control, it is controlled by outer conditions. The mind can be quickly influenced by outer conditions - whether the conditions

are favourable or not, our mind will go with them. If this is the case, we cannot achieve any stability in our life, and cannot achieve our goals. Therefore, think of meditation practice as something we do to support ourselves throughout our life.

Now we will continue the commentary on the thought-transformation text, "*The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*", last time we finished at Verse 6. The last two lines of that verse say:

Whatever is presented they always accept,
While destroying the poison of clinging desire.

These lines refer to the practice of Bodhisattvas, of those spiritual practitioners whose life is totally devoted to the benefit of all other beings. "They always accept" refers to the way Bodhisattvas perceive the things they experience, such as the five sensual objects - beautiful forms, pleasant sounds or smells, touch, and so forth.

The way Bodhisattvas experience these sensual objects is different from ordinary beings, who simply get attached, and are totally ignorant of the faults behind the appearance of these beautiful objects. Their experience of such objects is based only on their desire - they do not see any shortcomings, any underlying faults. As a result, rather than being a source of true happiness and inner peace, these objects, become a source of unhappiness and of more restlessness and delusions in the mind.

In the case of a Bodhisattva, if a Bodhisattva, for instance, is offered a high throne from which to give teachings or a discourse on Dharma, when they sit on such an elegant throne, they do not feel they are a higher being - their mind does not inflate with pride. Rather, the experience intensifies their understanding of the faults of pride. So, instead of a high throne being a cause of increasing pride, it is a cause of reducing it.

Likewise, when Bodhisattvas meet any beautiful sensual object, they have a clear understanding of its faults. Their experience of such sensual objects only brings them more peace and satisfaction. It does not bring discomfort or inner disturbance, because a Bodhisattva regards an object of desire as poison, which is different to the way ordinary beings see the same object.

Considering our own experience, beautiful objects seem very appealing. As a result, we feel a strong desire to have them. When this desire is not fulfilled, we feel disappointed and frustrated. We can see how our unhappiness comes from our own perceptions and the way we view or hold that object in the mind. When we see an object, if we just perceive it with a neutral attitude, we will not end up being dissatisfied or disappointed. But if we view that object as beautiful or, even worse if

we strongly believe that object to be essential to our happiness, our life will never be fulfilled until we obtain it. We also may have to struggle hard to obtain the object. So it is not so much the object itself, but our desire (developing desire in the mind) for the object which is the cause of the suffering and unhappiness we experience.

It is important to investigate how your perception of an object can influence your life because, if you are not careful, you can spend your whole life being deceived by your own thoughts.

The next four lines says:

Verse 7

Uncontrollable wandering through rounds of
existence
Is caused by our grasping at egos as real.
This ignorant attitude heralds the demon
Of selfish concern for our welfare alone:

Here the text points out the root cause - the self-cherishing attitude - through which all sentient beings are born over and over again in cyclic existence, without getting a chance to reach the complete enlightenment of Buddhahood. In the line "is caused by our grasping at egos as real", the phrase "grasping at egos as real" doesn't refer to the wrong view of holding the conception of an inherently existent self, of grasping at an inherently existent self. The view of grasping at an inherent self is also abandoned by the Foe-Destroyer, or by one who has achieved the liberation of the lesser vehicle, such as a Hearer or a Solitary Realiser, who still have not achieved complete enlightenment which is free of all faults and possesses all the excellent qualities. Rather, the grasping at egos referred to here is the self-cherishing attitude, which is possessed by all sentient beings who have not yet achieved complete enlightenment.

This self-cherishing attitude is the main obstacle - to us or to any sentient being - to engage in actions that benefit others. In fact, instead of benefiting others, the self-cherishing attitude causes us to harm them by making us feel jealous of those who are higher than us, pride towards those who are lower than us, and competitive towards those who are our equal. This self-cherishing attitude is the main reason why all sentient beings have not achieved the perfect state of enlightenment, and are not free of all faults.

We will close the teaching here and, as usual, finish with the recitation of Buddha's mantra. Again, choose the correct posture, making sure you are relaxed and your mind is free of outer distractions; then, as we recite, focus the mind on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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