
Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

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A quote from the famous Tibetan teacher Lama Tsong Khapa says: "If the mind is good and positive, then all the paths and grounds will be also positive." It is saying that we all undoubtedly have a mind, but the important thing is to have a wholesome and positive mind to accompany us.

Whenever we experience some peace, clarity, joy and happiness within our mind, then this indicates that our mind is in a positive state. Generally speaking, if we examine the fundamental nature of our mind, we find that it is soft and has a more wholesome, human quality. However, even though everyone has the quality of good human nature within their mind, there are still shortcomings in our personalities and the way in which we think and act.

We can transform our mind by practising meditation. We need to train and discipline the mind to always focus on the right object, and the right way of thinking. When undertaking the practice of mind training, the most important thing to realise is the benefits of doing the practice, i.e. why do we need to train the mind?

As we discussed last week, it is always important to fully utilise the power of our own intelligence and knowledge. We should try to investigate our own life and mind, and try to find our own solutions. It is important to be able to guide our own life. We need to prevent our mind from always being distracted by objects which arouse delusions and disturbing thoughts. We can train our mind in this manner by applying the practice of meditation. Then we can free the mind from being overpowered by delusions and other disturbing thoughts.

Through such mental training we can develop positive qualities in the mind. Keeping this in mind, we will now do some breathing meditation. Try to fully relax your body. Prevent the mind from wandering outside. Gently, and without forcing it, try to bring the mind inward. In this state we will now begin the breathing meditation by fully bringing all our mental attention on the incoming and outgoing breath. Make an effort to retain the concentration on the breath, and don't lose it to outside objects.

We will continue the teaching on the thought transformation Text called *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons* by Dharmarakshita. Last year we finished with verse 7 of this root Text which reads:

Verse 7

Uncontrollable wandering through rounds of
existence
Is caused by our grasping and egos as real.
This ignorant attitude heralds the demon
Of selfish concern for our welfare alone:
We seek some security for our own egos;
We want only pleasure and shun any pain.
But now we must banish all selfish compulsion
And gladly take hardships for all others' sake.

We explained verse 7 last year but we shall repeat it.

In this verse the text says that deep within us there are two types of attitudes. These two attitudes are like the master and the servant. One of these attitudes is self-cherishing. With self-cherishing there is always, deep down, a concern about self. Along with this deep seated self-cherishing attitude there is also the self-grasping attitude. This attitude wrongly views the reality of the self, i.e. the way the 'I' or the self exists.

Therefore this verse is saying that due to the influence of these two deep seated selfish attitudes there is a strong concern exclusively for our own needs. We are always worrying about finding enough happiness and we fear facing problems. All our actions are directed to fulfilling the desires of our ego and our selfish mind. This verse is saying that this kind of selfish attitude is not going to help us fulfil our wishes. That is because many of our wishes depend on other people and external conditions.

This is just one reason to negate the selfish mind. Of course there are many other reasons. So we must, as the text says: "banish all selfish compulsion and gladly take hardship for all other sakes". The practice that is outlined here is concerned with trying to get rid of the selfish mind and selfish actions, and to adopt the mind that cherishes others, performs actions to benefit others and takes on hardships in order to serve others.

In our daily lives we should check whether showing a strong selfish attitude is doing us, or anyone else, any good. In general, no-one regards selfish people as good people. The selfish person's nature and attitude is seen as wrong. There is a feeling of not being able to fully trust a selfish person.

The feelings you have towards selfish egotistical people are the same feelings that others would have towards you if you showed any signs of a strong, selfish

egotistical attitude. If we cannot fully eliminate such a selfish mind, there are ways to minimise this attitude. We can do this by knowing the faults of the selfish mind based on our own experiences. Think of situations where our actions are motivated purely by a selfish mind. Then think of the consequences of these actions. Try to see the fault of the selfish mind, and you will be motivated to counteract and decrease it. Then you will notice more inner peace, and you will even appear as a better natured person to others.

The more we understand how the selfish mind becomes strong, the more we understand how it leads us to all sorts of unskilful and destructive actions. A selfish mind can be a driving force of destructive actions. Once we understand this in relation to ourselves, then we can understand others whose actions are motivated by the controlling force of a selfish mind as we will know what is behind their harmful actions.

As was said before, there are good human qualities and a good human nature within all of us. To manifest these positive qualities in our actions in order to benefit others, then we have to make an effort to decrease this self cherishing mind. Take everything said in the spiritual teachings as a practice in your own life, and see the benefits. The teachings benefit us by teaching us to become better people with better minds and mental attitudes. If we are successful in our spiritual practice, then this means that we are developing more positive qualities within our mind. With these qualities we will be personally happier and more peaceful, as well as benefiting others.

It is human nature to want to be loved by others, so generally we will all automatically want to be close to the people who show love and a caring feeling towards us. Even a dog has close feelings to an owner who shows a lot of love and affection. The dog feels secure when it is with the owner. It can enjoy the food given to it without any fear in its mind. But if an owner disciplines a dog with a stick, when the dog is given food it will eat because it is hungry, but there will be great fear in its mind. The animal who is looked after well will also give something in return. That's why many people feel that having a pet animal is almost like having another person in their lives, like a friend, someone to whom they can feel close.

Whoever cultivates a good heart and loving kindness within their minds, is automatically contributing some peace and harmony within the home and at work. If everyone in the world, or as many as possible, can generate such a feeling of true love and compassion, then this can create peace and harmony in the world. With peace and harmony there would be no reason to feel fear or to feel threatened.

If we can generate and develop love, it has an immediate effect on our friends and family. You can see that parents who show a great deal of love and care to their children have given them a good upbringing. As a result, when the children grow up, they will also have that caring attitude and the same qualities of goodness, love and

compassion with which they were brought up. You can tell that some children have such a good nature due to their parents' example.

The benefit of undertaking a spiritual practice is to cultivate the human qualities of love and compassion towards others. So, as I always emphasise, the spiritual path we are seeking is to find the guide within us. The true guide that we find within is trustworthy, reliable and lasting. Relying on outer guides doesn't last. For instance, you know how quickly a friendship can change, and how a friend can be lost for life, or a friend in the night can be lost the next morning. So we cannot always rely on our outer friends. It is important that through our spiritual practice we seek our inner guide, our inner friend. The other thing which is always emphasised in the teachings is to always be responsible for our physical health, in addition to our mental happiness and peace of mind. Physical happiness and health is important, and something we depend upon. The essence of the meaning of life is to enjoy a sound and happy mind and body.

We will finish the teaching here and, as usual, we will recite the Buddha's mantra. Relax your body and focus the mind on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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