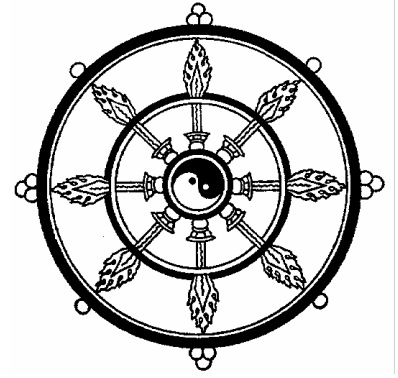


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering



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First of all we will do some breathing meditation. So please sit in a comfortable posture and relax your body.

It is important to achieve some calm and joy within our mind, as our mind is the driving force behind any actions we do. The mind is like our boss. Whatever actions we do depend upon its orders. So whether our actions will be meaningful or not, and whether they will bring us more peace or not, depends upon the type of mind which motivates those actions. If our mind (which dominates us) enjoys peace and joy, then we will also be peaceful and happy; and our actions will be meaningful. So it is important that while our body and mind are at rest (while meditating) the focus and aim of the meditation should be to bring peace and happiness within our mind.

All the problems and troubles that we face in life are mainly caused by our own mind. In trying to find the cause of our problems we may ask ourselves 'why do we have to experience such unsatisfactoriness in life when we live in such a fortunate and suitable environment?' For example, think of the country where you live, and all the facilities that are available, think of your healthy human life, along with all the other good conditions surrounding you. You can see that you are surrounded by the best conditions that can be found, and that as a member of this human society you contribute to them. As far as the outer conditions of life go, there is no real reason for you to suffer and feel miserable. Therefore one begins to see that the cause of our problems and difficulties lies within ourselves.

So what is the cause of these problems that we find within ourselves? It is the lack of mental calmness. We lack this mental calmness and inner peace because our mind lacks discipline - it is very wild and lacking control. As long as we are possessed by an untamed wild and uncontrolled mind then no matter what good conditions we find in life, there will be no chance for happiness.

So try to generate the motivation to counteract this unsubdued mind. That is why we are engaging in this meditation practice. With this motivation we begin the meditation.

First, try to control the mind from wandering after objects allowing it to just abide within. Our aim is to discipline the mind. So having brought the mind inward then we try to stop it from wandering outward. This is achieved by directing or placing the mind on the breath as it goes out and comes in at the nostrils. Try to cultivate your concentration single pointedly on the breath.

You will find that it is very effective and beneficial to

practise meditation in order to develop a more positive attitude. It is the way to build a positive pattern of thinking in our mind.

Now we will continue with our discussions on the text, *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*. After finishing the introductory verse of paying homage, we will now discuss the first verses:

Verse 1

In jungles of poisonous plants strut the peacocks,
Though medicine gardens of beauty lie near.
The masses of peacocks do not find gardens
pleasant,
But thrive on the essence of poisonous plants.

Verse 2

In similar fashion, the brave Bodhisattvas
Remain in the jungle of worldly concern.
No matter how joyful this world's pleasure
gardens,
These brave ones are never attracted to pleasures,
But thrive in the jungle of suffering and pain.

In verse 1 the author has used the example of peacocks surviving on a diet of poisonous plants. When living in the forest the peacock is never attracted to beautiful flowers but always looks for poisonous plants. This is because, by eating poisonous plants, they enjoy a diet which nourishes their body and also brings more lustre and more splendid beauty to their body.

It says next: 'In similar fashion so the brave Bodhisattvas'. The Bodhisattvas are called the 'brave ones' because they have totally forsaken their selfish pursuits with the cultivation of an altruistic mind with altruistic intentions.

The line: 'they remain in the jungle of worldly concerns' means that the Bodhisattvas, (the brave ones) choose to live in the jungle or forest of worldly concerns, worldly existence. The verse compares worldly existence with the darkness of the forest, because worldly existence is 'darkened' by delusions such as desire, hatred and ignorance. 'No matter how joyful this world's pleasure garden', means that the Bodhisattvas, while living in the jungle of worldly existence, are never attracted to any apparent pleasure, happiness, glory, or any marvellous thing that you see in this existence. Why not? It is because the Bodhisattvas foresee that the consequence of being attracted to the seeming pleasure and beauty of this worldly existence is suffering and misery. As it says: 'these brave ones are never attracted to pleasures but

thrive in the jungle of suffering and pain'. So the Bodhisattvas take the pain and suffering that exists in this world upon themselves.

Just like the peacocks who are nourished and gain strength from eating poisonous plants so do the brave ones, the Bodhisattvas, turn all adverse conditions into a path, as a means to attain their ultimate goal of full enlightenment.

The Bodhisattvas feel no aversion towards unattractive objects, nor desire towards attractive objects. This is not the case when we think of ordinary beings.

Ordinary beings easily feel aversion to even minor bad conditions and are easily attracted to minor objects of pleasure. Therefore ordinary beings find much suffering and dissatisfaction because of this attitude of liking and disliking. As we can see within ourselves, we can immediately become angry when we hear insulting words from others. We are angry at the person and we hate to hear such insulting things. This is because we are attached, we have a desire to hear nice things and pleasant words. If we didn't have that desire, we wouldn't be so disturbed by hearing unpleasant words from others.

The attitude of the ordinary being is such that we do not want to lose, and are not prepared to lose, a small portion of happiness and do not want to tolerate any small loss or suffering. This attitude serves as a continuous source of our suffering and is the main cause of instability in our life.

If we see a pleasant object then immediately we desire that object. The consequence of these desires is suffering, frustration and anxiety. These desires bring pressure in our mind to obtain or possess those objects. With desires we can never be satisfied, because we always want to possess more and more wealth, and to have more and more friends, without being content with what we already possess. So in this way desire is a very deep source of continuous misery and suffering. It is because of our ignorance and mental dullness that we don't foresee suffering as a result of desire. Instead desire appears to be very appealing and positive to us.

Even if we don't recognise every fault or shortcoming of desire, we can still see its faults to some extent within the context of our own experience. We can become restless when our desired object is not close to us, or become frustrated in trying to get that object. So because we are able to obtain it, we experience suffering and pain whenever we experience desire for that object.

Is there anything we can do to prevent this miserable experience of desire? We experience desire because our mind is engaged in that object of desire. We can disengage our mind from this object by occupying our mind with another object. By exerting some effort we can actually move the mind from one object to another object, thereby changing our whole attitude, and changing the state of the mind. This is not the permanent solution to desire, but it can temporarily relieve us from desires which may be causing us a great deal of suffering.

Understanding the consequences of anger doesn't require

much knowledge, because we can all understand very clearly that anger is a destructive force. It can destroy us and destroy others. We generate anger because we are not able to change a situation or because we lack tolerance for a situation. The text is saying here that if we are skilful then, just like the brave Bodhisattvas, it is possible for us to also transform all outer conditions, pleasant or unpleasant, as a means to reach enlightenment. We can develop our spiritual qualities just like the peacocks who became more beautiful by living on poisons. With skill and knowledge we can turn adverse situations into a means to achieve enlightenment.

It is very important for beings who live in this worldly existence to minimise desire and hatred as much as possible because, as mentioned earlier, if we challenge or diminish desire and hatred then we can find more peace, happiness and satisfaction in our lives.

The way to challenge or diminish desire and hatred is by training our mind. The strength of desire in our mind depends on how well acquainted our mind is with desire. For example, if we are well acquainted with hatred, then it won't take much to make us lose our temper and become angry.

Our mind is flexible by nature, so we can change our mental habits. Through training our mind it is possible to reduce desire and hatred. The enemy of desire and hatred within ourselves, is not like the outer enemy we fight. We cannot get others to help us defeat the inner enemies. We have to defeat them on our own. So what can defeat this enemy?

Shantideva said that if we become more aware of ourselves then we will see clearly why there is no end of suffering and problems in our life. When we have desire, we bring our number one enemy of peace into the very centre of our heart. So through exerting some effort to challenge that deep inner enemy, we can see that we will begin to naturally find joy in life.

We complain about problems and things that go wrong in our life, and that there is not enough happiness in our life. The real problem which causes all this is our own mind. We can point to no other cause of the problem.

But the real joy of life is in the joys that already exist around us. We can't see them because of the delusions in our mind. Removing those delusions is like unfolding the happiness we already have.

In contrast when our mind is very deluded then we see everything as being very negative and miserable. That's why we see things as having no happiness and no joy. When we minimise such delusions then we can see that everything around us is a cause to enhance peace and happiness in the mind.

So we finish the teaching here and as usual we will chant the Buddha's mantra. Try to once again sit in comfortable posture, bring the mind inward and fully concentrate on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

Final version

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