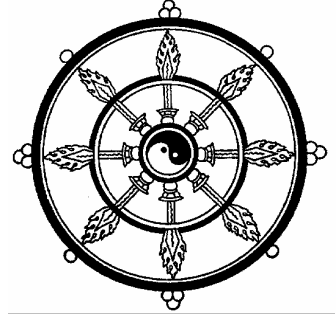


# Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

ཨོ སྤྱི་ལོ་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



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Find a most relaxing and convenient position, making sure your body is fully relaxed.

Simply resting physically doesn't automatically bring peace or relaxation, because our mind can still wander all over the place. If we don't change our mind from being distracted towards external objects and don't settle it, we cannot find true peace; any physical peace we do find doesn't achieve our purpose. So, after sitting in meditation posture, direct one's attention to the mind and see how undisciplined it is, in the sense that it doesn't stop thinking. We have to think of this unruly mind as our number one enemy; however, until now, we have not recognised it as such. Now that we have, we should determine to get rid of this mind, to challenge and completely subdue it. In this way, generate the proper motivation before beginning one's meditation practice.

Try to get rid of all wandering thoughts so that your whole mind is directed inward. Having done this, start the breathing meditation, trying to focus the mind single-pointedly on the outgoing and incoming breath, and making every effort to prevent outer distractions from arising.

Now please come out of your meditation. If we just sit in meditation practice, our hearing doesn't work. When the mind is completely focused on the meditation object, the function of all our other sense consciousnesses can cease. Therefore, for your mind to have better concentration on the given object when you engage in meditation practice, your eyes should be slightly open - not widely open and not completely closed. This helps our mental concentration.

Meditation enhances the inner happiness we derive from our mind. Therefore, when we engage in meditation practice, we should try to calm the mind from distracting thoughts. We have to hope that through meditation practice we can find happiness, joy and peace within. When we find this inner happiness, we would have more faith in our practice and feel more positive about it because we know that it satisfies our mind. Normally, people go after desirable and beautiful objects because they perceive them as a source of enjoyment, pleasure or contentment. They see the fulfilling of desire as pleasure, and finding the object of desire becomes a prime concern. If we investigate how much happiness or satisfaction the desired object gives us and how long that satisfaction lasts, this happiness is short-lived. But the amount of problems and suffering we undergo is great; in the long run, it does not give happiness.

On the other hand, the inner happiness we find through meditation practice can even outwardly make us a calm, peaceful, gentle person and even our outer actions become calm and peaceful. So inner peace is not only good for you, but enables you to benefit other people like your close friends and others around you. They benefit from being

close to someone who is calm, peaceful and gentle.

There is the question of why we should follow the spiritual path to find happiness, because there are many other means of finding happiness. If you follow a spiritual practice, you have to show why this path is special compared to other means of finding happiness. Most people think that happiness is the satisfaction of our desires for various things. But we should investigate the desire we have of wanting certain objects, and its direct effect on us. If the object this desire seeks is not fulfilled, you suffer frustration and disappointment. Next, we have to think is it possible to provide all the things desire wants? It is impossible - there is no end to its wants.

We can also investigate the situation of facing some crisis in our life. The immediate cause could be hatred or anger because of conflict with others. But if we investigate the immediate cause of this conflict or dispute with others, we see it is because of desire - we have a desire to achieve something and we have disputes with others because they are in our way.

If we check, the main cause of all the problems we face in our life is our unfulfilled desire. Whatever pleasure that fulfillment of desire may give us, it is not worth having. Instead of the pleasure we gain from desire, we should seek the happiness or joy not related to desire, which arises when our mind becomes completely calm, free from all forms of mental delusion such as desire and anger and wandering thoughts. If we could enhance that within us, it will have a positive effect, not only immediately but also in the longer term.

Our choice is whether to like desire or like the Dharma. It requires a lot of knowledge to make this choice, because if we follow the footsteps of the Lord Buddha, we know we have to direct our mind towards Dharma and try to get used to it. As we know from the Lord Buddha's own life story, in his pursuit of enlightenment he renounced his worldly life. He was not just an ordinary man but belonged to a royal family, a great kingdom. He gave up the wealth of this kingdom and his wife and children, all the desirable things of the world - he renounced all this and achieved enlightenment. All the teachings he gave were the reflection of what Lord Buddha himself had experienced in his own life; the teachings he gave were to subdue mental delusions.

Therefore, if we investigate with an intelligent mind whether perceiving the object of desire, or whether perceiving the Dharma, the path of non-attachment, is the way to find happiness, we see that the Dharma is the true way to lasting peace and happiness. If we show more interest in Dharma and try to familiarise ourselves more with Dharma practice, we find more benefit. As well as understanding why Dharma is more beneficial and why

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desire brings shortcomings, we can observe the life of others to see the difference between the type of happiness brought by desire that brought by the Dharma. You can see this in the life story of great spiritual practitioners. It doesn't matter what school of religion they follow, when you observe the life of great spiritual beings, you can see that the peace and happiness they enjoy is stable, so that can give us inspiration. What is important is to take the step that truly brings more benefit to our life.

The time is nearly gone; however, Geshe Doga asks whether anyone has a question. Geshe Doga has given his opinion to you. Now it is your turn to give your opinion or any question to Geshe Doga on anything he has said that you don't agree with.

*Q: What is the difference between thinking about the things you need and thinking about the things that you desire, like in life some things you need and other things you desire?*

A: I think your question is more to do with the problem of terminology. In Buddhist teaching, when we use the term 'desire' or 'attachment' there is a specific definition. When you understand that definition, you see that when we say desire or attachment we are not saying it is just a want, like saying in everyday life, 'I desire this' or 'I want' or 'I need'. To answer your question we have to know the definition of desire first of all.

*Q: My definition of desire? That is what I am trying to work out!*

Even when we talk of showing love or compassion or sympathy towards others and have some wish to help a person solve their problems or give some support or comfort to that person - in this sense, love and compassion is a bit like desire, the desire to do something for other beings, the desire to solve their problems or give them happiness. The desire that we show towards objects that are appealing and attractive to our mind is negative. Let's say that right in front of us there is one side a beautiful person, male or female, for whom you have strong desire or attachment. On the other side, there is someone in great pain or in desperate need of help. One person is your object of desire and the other person you feel compassion for. Now see what is the difference - with compassion, just for argument's sake, say you desire to help and support that person.

If we use the word 'desire' - 'I desire that person' - and examine why they are an object of desire we see them as absolutely beautiful and appealing to us, their color, their hair, their shape, their finger-nails, even the smell of their body. They are everything you desire and seem objectively and completely attractive and appealing, almost as if this beauty or quality of attractiveness is inherent, the smell of the body and everything, so much so that even something we normally call a bad smell or ugly can become very appealing to us. It is said that why desire makes the object appear totally beautiful is because of the influence of some mistaken view or misconception within us. In a way, all the beauty we see is the projection, the exaggeration, of this subtle misconception within our mind. So we describe that desire as something that craves or grasps at an object.

Not all the things we wish for or desire can be called 'desires', as defined before. What desire does to us is if we don't control or challenge it is that it makes us a victim or prisoner. If desire were a tangible object with a mouth, it would be saying to us that the desired object is something

we must have if we are to have secure happiness and satisfaction. Desire can appeal for its object so strongly that we feel if we don't get that object, our life will have meaning and there is no point even to living. When we are completely overpowered by such desire, we are ready to commit any form of negative action, even murder, to find the desired object. We feel that, unless we satisfy this desire, we cannot enjoy ourselves or even find a moment's peace. So this is desire. Desire can only be seen as a source of suffering now and in the future because it can influence us to create negative, unskillful or immoral actions.

Now if you have strong love say towards your parents, will this love also be a source of problems for one? Because of this love, whenever you hear of problems your parents undergo, you feel unhappy. Love and compassion towards others can also bring some sadness to one's mind, when other beings undergo suffering or painful experiences. The difference is that love and compassion have a positive influence on one's mind so that we undertake positive actions; for instance, because of your love, you feel sympathy and concern, and because of this you go and help out your parents. Thus, this feeling of sympathy helps you to create more virtuous actions, more merit, which is the opposite to the effect of unfulfilled desire.

Another important difference between desire and love or compassion is that desire is motivated by a selfish attitude, whereas love and compassion is an attitude of helping and cherishing others. Desire sees an object as a source of enjoyment of pleasure for oneself. But when we have love and compassion for someone, we want to share with them or help them or give to them. Geshe Doga said that he always emphasises that in our relationships with friends and relatives, it is important that we don't like each other just out of desire and attachment but also try to show each other this feeling of true love and compassion. True love and compassion are essential in the relationship because we can help each other when we are in need. If you have true love and compassion towards the other person, when that other person is in need, you are there to help. If there is no true love and compassion in the relationship, but it is instead based on desire for each other, we see the other person as a source of pleasure for our own senses. This means that if the other person were not in a position to provide this, you lose interest in that person.

Geshe Doga gives an example of a couple where one partner is lying in hospital. It is possible that the other person is so worried about his or own problem that they go out to find another friend and even engage in adultery. Desire makes us only like a person as long as they are in some way useful by giving pleasure. When they do not, we try to distance ourselves and when they undergo some health, financial or other problem, if your interest is based on desire, it is likely you will want to be separated. You can see the difference between love and desire, and see how important it is to bring more love and compassion to each other for our relationship to last longer and be more meaningful.

Now we finish by chanting the Buddha's mantra. Once again try to relax yourself, calm the mind and focus it on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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