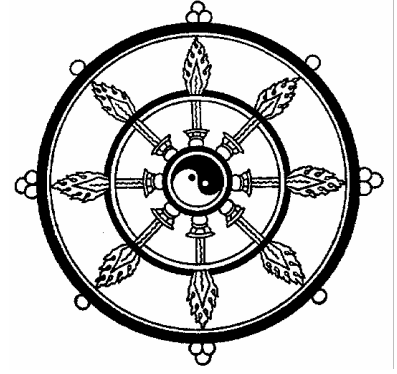


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

ཨོ ལྷོ་སྤྱོད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



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As usual, we begin with a few minutes breathing meditation together. Adopt a suitable sitting posture and make sure that your body is fully relaxed.

The next thing you try to do is check the mind and if it is wandering outside, one should stop that. Removing all outgoing thoughts brings the mind inward and stabilises it.

Having brought the mind inward without letting it get distracted by other objects, direct your mental focus to the incoming and outgoing breath, and try to focus on it single-pointedly.

As breathing meditation becomes easy for us, we can combine it with the meditation technique of giving and taking. As one's mind focuses on the incoming breath, we can observe all other sentient beings who are undergoing suffering, feeling compassion and sympathy for them. Breathing in, one imagines taking upon oneself all their suffering and causes of sufferings; thus the technique can intensify the force of our compassion towards other beings. Likewise, as you breathe out, try to observe all other beings who lack happiness and cultivate love, the strong wish for them to have happiness and the causes of happiness. Influenced by this love, as you breathe out, you send every happiness and the causes of happiness to all beings. So, once your mind is well trained in the breathing meditation technique, you find it becomes much easier to undertake this, or any other, meditation practice.

We will continue the commentary on the thought transformation text *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons* by the famous Indian master Dharmarakshita. We are now at verse 39, which reads:

When attachment and anger disturb and upset us
No matter how much we may try to suppress them,
This is the wheel of sharp weapons returning
Full circle upon us from wrongs we have done.
Till now we have held on to the improper outlook,
Stubbornly cherishing only ourselves;
Hereafter let's uproot self-interest completely.

This verse confirms our experience of feeling uncontrolled attachment towards desirable objects or towards people we regard as close friends, and a feeling hatred towards undesirable objects such as those we regard as enemies. This verse also points out the cause of having uncontrollable emotions like desire or hatred, or strong like or dislike. The fact that we cannot control emotions such as desire and hatred shows us that we are

overpowered by mental delusions. The problems we face and the conflict and confusion we experience are all caused by having uncontrolled desire or hatred. Whenever we perceive a beautiful object that we mentally hold close, we get attached to that object - it stimulates desire in our minds and we have no control. Likewise, when we see a person we don't like or some other undesirable object, we can't help hating or disliking that object.

So from our experience we can see how we are controlled by what we call the afflictive emotions of desire and hatred. As a result, there is no end to our problems and difficulties. Why do these uncontrolled afflictive emotions arise? This verse says it is because in the past we did not think of challenging the selfish mind; rather we let it rule our lives and simply undertook any action that pleased it. To overcome the afflictive emotions that bring us suffering, we have to reduce this self-cherishing mind.

We can't simply believe in what the world generally regards as the right thing to do. Rather, we have to decide whether an action is right or wrong based on whether it brings benefit to us in terms of giving us a stable life with harmonious relationships. From a worldly perspective it is right to harm someone who causes us problems, and right to feel strong desire for people we are close to. But with this attitude, it is impossible to bring stability to our lives.

Our attitude of desire or hatred is conditioned by our perceptions of outside things. For instance, whether an object such as a person is truly beautiful or not, or truly fond of you or not, is determined by your mental projection. If you perceive a person as a friend, as being attractive, you naturally desire them. However, if you see a person as not very attractive, you will hold some hatred towards that person.

Further the desire and hatred we feel have no stable basis - they change so easily, depending on our view of the objects. Our view can change, for instance, in a relationship where a friend may say a few harsh or unpleasant words, which may be enough to replace our attachment with hatred for that person. If we don't change this attitude, we cannot find stability in our lives - we can't even trust others and they can't trust us. For instance, two people in a relationship may say to each other that they are very much in love, but if they think deeply, both may feel there is not 100 per cent faith in the other. So they have to be careful in their interactions -

they are wary about what they say and do and where they go. This is because if one of them said something wrong it could harm the relationship, the friend would immediately get hurt and become angry.

If we think about why we get angry or attached to things so quickly, the answer is our selfish mind. We have this 'I' within us, and when we see or hear something beautiful, it pleases the 'I'. If, however, we hear unpleasant words, the 'I' dislikes hearing them, and it gets upset. If we have a strong ego, we cannot stop afflictive emotions like desire or hatred arising. As a result, there is no stability in our lives, we're always up and down - one moment happy, the next unhappy, one moment you like someone, the next moment you don't.

So we can see that afflictive emotions like desire and hatred are the real enemies of life's happiness and peace. But, if we get rid of these enemies, we will have lasting peace and happiness- and harmonious relationships in which there is more openness, more freedom, more faith, a relationship where you do not have to worry about the other, where you go, who you see, or how long you go for.

And we should remind ourselves about the destructiveness of the afflictive emotions, the harm they can do to us. For instance, most of us cherish our lives so much that we cannot even endure somebody piercing our bodies with a small needle. But, when overpowered by strong desire or hatred- let alone the harm we can do to others- we might even commit suicide.

This verse says "Hereafter let's uproot self-interest completely...".

So, after seeing how desire and hatred trap us in this endless cycle of suffering, and seeing that the root cause is the self-cherishing mind, we can try now to cultivate the determination to challenge and diminish this selfish mind.

We will finish the teaching here for tonight. Now we will recite the Buddha's mantra seven times together. As before, we sit in meditation posture, relaxing the body and calming the mind; then we focus the mind on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

*Transcribed from the tapes by Jenny Brooks
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Edited Version*

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