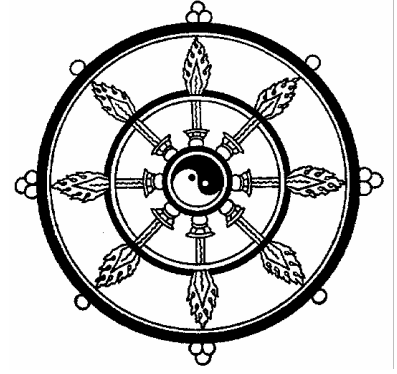


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

ཨྌ ལྷོ་སྤྱིང་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



30 September 1998

We will do some breathing meditation first. So relax your body and choose the most comfortable meditation posture. Often we find that even when we are physically relaxed, we are still not quite at rest. This is because we can't relax if our minds are not happy. So we should investigate what brings this unease and unhappiness to our minds. We will find that it is the influence of wandering thoughts that disturbs the mind. So when meditating we try to motivate ourselves to calm these wandering thoughts and calm the mind inward.

As soon as we get rid of the wandering thoughts, then our minds will settle inward and we can find some inner peace and tranquility for a little while. However we can't enjoy this inner peace for very long, because the mind starts to wander again. So before that happens we should start the breathing meditation where we just focus

on the outgoing and incoming breaths, and try to be fully aware of each breath coming in and going out.

We should try to practise meditation whenever we can in our daily lives. And remember, if there is a problem that bothers us we shouldn't dwell on it continuously but try to change or replace this problematic thought with the thought of how to resolve the unwanted problem. When we start thinking of how to solve a problem, we may actually be able to find the solution ourselves.

Since we haven't done any teachings on the text of "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons" in the last couple of weeks, we had better do this teaching tonight. Verse 44 reads:

When the force of attraction or that of repulsion
Colours whatever we hear or say
This is the wheel of sharp weapons returning
Full circle upon us from wrongs we have done.
'Till now we have ignored what has caused all our
troubles:

The mass of delusion that dwells in our heart;
Hereafter let's try to abandon all hindrances-
Note their arising, examine them well.

This verse is concerned about what type of motivation or frame of mind we should have when giving spiritual teachings to others or listening to teachings from others. We have to keep in mind that the fundamental purpose of our spiritual practice is to challenge and remove all the mental delusions from our minds. They act as a source of suffering in your life and in others' lives.

The types of delusions we are talking about are attachment, desire, jealousy, pride, competitiveness and

so on. Even teachers' motivations should not be tainted with any form of delusion or wanting to receive some kind of material reward. This is against the spiritual teachings. It is also wrong if their motivation is to compete against other teachers, or to seek to increase their good name and reputation. When teachings are given in this way with a faulty motivation, then neither the delusions in the teacher's or the listeners' mind can be overcome by the teachings. Even though we can't completely free our minds from delusions like desire or hatred, it is important to make some effort to correct the mind and cultivate even a fabricated motivation of compassion towards others before we start to teach.

Likewise, it is important for the listener to have a good motivation and counteract all the negative states of mind within. Then our listening is very effective in terms of calming the mind and, afterwards, putting into practice the motivations we established at the start of the teachings. But if there is a fault in our motivation, for example, only learning Dharma to increase our knowledge over others, this just boosts our pride and increases our jealousy toward others' knowledge. If students approach spiritual teachings with such a faulty state of mind, then inner progress cannot be made, and inner peace and happiness will not be found. Often such students find it difficult to establish harmonious relations with other students. Even if students do their meditations and discuss their studies, if there is a lack of harmony no-one in the group can enjoy it.

As His Holiness the Dalai Lama always says, whether our actions are good or bad depends a lot upon our motivation behind the action. If the motivation is good, then naturally the action will be good. So we should think of the importance of our motivation not only when we are doing our spiritual practices, but also when undertaking any kind of action at all. We need to check our motivation even for very mundane actions, and make sure that the action isn't done in order to compete with others, or done out of our jealous feelings toward others. If we follow this advice of keeping our motivation positive, then we will be sure that any actions we do will be truly spiritual and wholesome actions.

So when we teach the Dharma to others, our motivation should be to benefit them, making sure that there is no expectation of reward for ourselves. The teaching that we give to others is not to boost our own name or image. An incorrect motivation can cause us unhappiness. For instance, if the listener fails to admire our teaching or

makes some criticism, we can feel very negative about this feedback. Why? Because our motivation is tainted by a desire for a good response to our teaching.

We teach solely for the benefit of others, not for ourselves. We shouldn't have any hopes of receiving any personal gain in terms of praise or thanks and so on. With a good motivation we can be sure that, no matter what response we receive, our time has been spent properly. As the text says though, it is not always easy for us to have pure motivations for giving or listening to teachings. Our good motivations may still be influenced by our mental delusions. We can't prevent these mental delusions because:

This is the wheel of sharp weapons returning
full circle upon us from wrongs we have done.
'Till now we have ignored what has caused all our
troubles:
The mass of delusion that dwells in our heart.

This is an indication that we have not given enough thought to understanding and remembering the faults or the downfalls of the self-cherishing mind. This is why these delusions keep arising; we don't give enough thought to the shortcomings of our self-cherishing or self-centred mind. So we need to contemplate the faults of the self-cherishing mind and engage in a practice to oppose it, such as the meditation of giving and taking.

So, as the verse advises: 'hereafter let's try to abandon all hindrances, note their arising, examine them well'. All mental delusions that arise in our minds, and serve as a hindrance to our spiritual practice, are derived from the self-cherishing mind. We need to resolve to now challenge and counteract this self-cherishing mind.

We will now chant the Buddha's mantra seven times. Just as before, try to relax your body and sit in the meditation posture. Try to settle the mind fully inward by overcoming all distracting thoughts. As we begin the chanting, concentrate the mind on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

*Transcribed from the tapes by Jenny Brooks
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