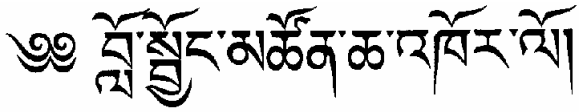


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# Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering



7 April 1999

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We will start with a few minutes breathing meditation together.

Please try to relax your body, and make sure that your sitting posture is most comfortable.

We have to remember that when we engage in meditation practice our mind should not be same as it usually is. When we engage in meditation practice it is important that we get rid of all thoughts of distracting objects. It is good if we don't allow such distracting thoughts to arise in our mind.

In meditation practice we should first check our mind, and try to recognise what frame of mind we have right at this moment. It is said that if we recognise a very positive, calm and peaceful state of mind, then we don't have to do anything - we can just remain neutral.

However if we recognise some negative mental attitude, or some very disturbing conceptions, then it is said that we must first get rid of them. Otherwise this can interrupt our meditation. They become an obstacle to achieving any inner peace and happiness through this meditation practice.

The famous Geshe Kurawa said that without understanding the function of our mind (in the sense of whether or not it is functioning properly, and whether or not it is going in right direction), then no matter what actions we do, they are not going to be a cause to enhance peace and happiness in the mind. Whereas if we know the nature and function of the mind, then it is said that it is possible to find this mental peace and happiness, even in the face of unfavourable circumstances. In other words even unfavourable conditions or circumstances can be transformed into favourable ones.

We say that meditation is a very effective means of bringing about peace and happiness in the mind. There are a lot of things to understand about meditation practice, and we have to understand that it is more than just finding some moment of rest and peace for our mind. We have to understand that meditation is actually about developing more understanding and knowledge of our mind.

We have to understand that the unwanted problems that we confront in life are not, as our ordinary our daily

mind believes, caused only by external conditions. Whenever we confront problems we always try to blame the cause on some person or external object. We don't even consider that one of the major causes of the problems that we go through in life is our own mind. We don't understand that a lot of these problems are all the direct result of generating various types of unnecessary thoughts.

When we engage in meditation practice we try to understand how a lot of problems are all created by our own wrong way of thinking. With meditation practice we are applying a means to stop, or at least reduce the opportunity for thoughts that result in some form of unease and unsatisfactoriness. We can understand that the only way to stop, or minimise, the production of this unwanted state of mind is to train our mind in something else, by directing our mind to different objects, and different ways of thinking.

The Tibetan term for meditation means to familiarise. This means that when we engage in meditation practice we are familiarising our mind with a some virtuous, positive object which is a beneficial way of thinking. There is no point in undertaking any practice if we are not sure that it will achieve some result. We can understand why meditation can help to change our mind by looking closely at the patterns of the thought that we can have, and the pattern of emotions that we generate. It all depends upon the way of thinking with which our mind is most familiar.

If our mind is preoccupied with a certain pattern of thinking, or object, and then this stimulates disturbing thoughts and emotions, then we can understand that we have to make an effort to apply this meditation training to break those patterns. Through this we can see a result. Once we change this pattern through meditation practice then we can see some transformation in our mind.

As we remove all these disturbing thoughts, which we recognise as a cause of unhappiness, stress or whatever, then we can find more and more peace and happiness in our mind. It is said that once our mind is very calm, disciplined and subdued then naturally our outer actions, whether of speech or any other outer action of body, will also have the same effect of calmness and peace. Therefore the benefit and effectiveness of meditation lies in the fact that the main cause of finding

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happiness in our life is creating the right actions, because the source of all our happiness or suffering is mainly in our actions, whether of body, speech or mind. So we can see the true benefit of meditation.

Actually we are supposed to be meditating, and I been talking too much again. So we will now do a few minutes breathing meditation. As said before, try to sit in the sitting posture, and get rid of all distracting thoughts. Through this try to rest the mind, making sure that it is focussed fully inward. After you have turned the mind inward, start your meditation by using the inhaling and exhaling of the breath as your object. Try to focus the mind just on the breath, without the influence of any distraction or external objects. *Pause for meditation*

Now we will continue the commentary on the text called *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*.

We are up to, the last two lines of verse 51 which say:

With your powerful mantra of cherishing  
others,  
Demolish this enemy lurking within!

Many teachings mention the mantra destroying enemies. This specific teaching on the Bodhicitta mind is teaching on the king of mantras.

When we consider the type of the enemy, or the cause that brings living beings the most harm and destruction, then it is the self-cherishing mind. The Bodhicitta mind, the altruistic mind of enlightenment, is the direct opponent to this harmful enemy of the self-cherishing mind, because with the Bodhicitta mind then we will cherish other beings and abandon self concerns.

Here the term "mantra" is used for the Bodhicitta mind, this altruistic mind of enlightenment. This Bodhicitta literally fulfils the terminological meaning of mantra. Generally mantra means "to protect", or "that which protects". Furthermore it is said that the Bodhicitta mind is the king of mantras because it protects us from a lot of shortcomings and downfalls. We have to understand that the downfalls from which Bodhicitta mind protects us are the all the shortcomings that are the result of this self-cherishing mind.

The term "mantra" can have different meanings depending upon the various different teaching contexts. So it's important not to think that when we say the word "mantra" that it refers just to very specific secret teachings.

We going to leave the teaching here. Do you have a question to ask ... only make it an easy one to answer! *(laughter)*

Question: Should we wait until we really feel like cherishing others before doing beneficial actions for them, or should we just do the actions, as if we are training to cherish others *(remainder unclear)*?

Answer: If we had to wait until we rid ourselves of the self-cherishing mind before benefiting others, then that will be very, very long wait. When we say when we talk

about overcoming the self-cherishing mind then we need to realise that the self-cherishing mind exists at different levels in terms of intensity. Sometimes it is very strong, sometimes of medium strength, and sometimes not very strong at all. Sometimes it is manifestly obvious and sometimes, although it's within us, it is not obvious or manifested. At the same time we have to understand that even though we all may have such a self-cherishing mind, at the same time we also have a sense of love, compassion and care. Even if we have not overcome the self-cherishing mind we have a loving, caring feeling towards others that is very manifest and obvious to others. Therefore if we are trying to make some effort to cultivate, and see more reason to show, love and show a caring thought towards others, then naturally this would help you to benefit other beings.

Having cultivated and developed some loving kindness and compassion for others, then naturally we have a less self-cherishing mind, because concern about our own needs becomes less important to us. Think, for instance of the way some parents think about their children - their children's needs always comes first. When they see something beneficial for the future of their children, then they prepared to sacrifice all their own needs. What makes the parents make this sacrifice is their strong love, compassion and so on, for their children.

All we have to do is do our practice to the best of our knowledge and capacity. We cannot expect to do everything perfectly right from the beginning. Rather we can only make progress in our practice step-by-step, and very gradually. As mentioned earlier our main practice is just trying to develop a focus on trying to develop love, and to value the benefit of showing love and compassion for other beings. It is not just a matter of performing an action, but the action has to arise out of a feeling of love, compassion and care towards others.

We have to consider what condition can motivate us to engage in any form of beneficial actions. The cause is cultivating love and compassion towards others. When we cultivate this, then we have genuine benevolent attitude. When we cultivate this attitude, then naturally, in some way or other, we will be devoting ourself to helping other beings.

On the other hand, when we check why we are not engaging in enough actions to benefit other beings, then we can understand that it is not because we lack the resources to benefit others, nor is it because we lack the capacity or ability to benefit others. It is because we have not cultivated enough of this attitude of benefiting and helping other beings.

The other issue is the question of how to make our actions the most truly beneficial to others. Performing actions that benefit others does not always mean that we have done them out of love. There can be other influences or causes such as our desire or attachment to them, or some other reason. Even if they are beneficial actions, the kind of motivation behind those actions makes a great difference to the other people's mind.

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It is best that we first try to perfect our love and compassion for others in relation to those people who are closest to us. Why? Because with those people there is always some base on which to practise this love and compassion, as you already have a true, genuine thought of caring for them. Suppose there are two people who are in need, one of them a friend and the other a stranger to you. Normally we would first help to fulfil the need of the person who is our friend. This is because there is already have some sense of care there.

Therefore it is said that in terms of practice, it is best if, as much as we can, at first we try to show and develop this love and compassion for those surrounding us, and who are closest to us. When you do this then you can see the benefits of this so very clearly and obviously. Whatever the help that you give to others, or the things that you do for them, or the time that you give to them, you try to do out of this pure love, pure concern, and pure care for them. You know it means more to them, than if the help was given without these caring feelings for them.

When other people recognise this, then naturally they start to develop trust and faith in you, and they start to feel a sense of gratitude towards you. So they start to develop this closeness with you. That in turn is also something that you will very much appreciate. So in a way the actions that you did as a result of your love create good feelings in your relationship with others.

We should also try to understand and recognise that sometimes you help others due to some selfish reasons, for example so that they will do us favour. You have some sort of expectation of them. When other people can sense that, then even though they get some benefit from your actions, because of this selfishness behind that action, then no matter how much and for how long you do those actions, somehow they cannot they can't reciprocate with a good gesture of friendship or trust.

Of course we don't need to discuss these things; we know know very well from our own experience how, if somebody does a lot of things for you, and if you suspect that there is some selfish purpose or reason behind that, then you know that person cannot be trusted, and you cannot be fully comfortable with them.

If we think about it, we can differentiate in so many ways the differences between love and attachment. You know how important it is in the terms of our daily practice to overcome this self-cherishing mind. In other words practising to be able to give more benefit to other beings means trying to cultivate and develop this benevolent attitude towards others.

You know that even if such an attitude is not fully developed and cultivated, then on a daily basis we at least try to wish that we always have this attitude in our mind. We pray that we will able to create beneficial actions for others, especially for those who are close to us. At the same time we try also to pray that, even if we cannot benefit others, we will try to think of doing so, and try to think of preventing any form of harm to other

beings, or even minimising giving harm to other beings.

The actual answer to your question comes in the next few verses of the text.

That's all for tonight. We will now chant the Lord Buddha's mantra seven times. As we did before, try to relax yourself, and calm the mind inward. We should then try to focus the mind on the mantra without becoming distracted by any other objects.

**TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA**

*Transcribed from tape by Gaye Lewis-Radcliffe*

*Edited by Adair Bunnett*

*Edited Version*

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