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. Choose a comfortable sitting posture, stop the mind from wandering outside and stabilise the mind inward. Spend a few minutes being aware of the out-going and in-going breath.

We are going to go over the text on thought transformations called "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons" by the famous Indian master Dharmarakshita. We last finished at the last line of verse 54:

Cut! Cut! Break the knot of self-interest that binds us inside.

The repeating words 'cut, cut' refer to the two types of bodhicitta, the conventional and the ultimate. Conventional bodhicitta represents the main skillful methods on the spiritual path, while ultimate bodhicitta represents the wisdom on the path. 'Break the knot of self-interest that binds us inside' advises us to untie the knots in the mind of self-cherishing and the mind of self-grasping.

If we want to be a better person and our mind to be more positive, then the only way to achieve this is to apply both method and wisdom. Self-cherishing and self-grasping can make our minds very negative and destructive. It's like we are ill because we are under the influence of self-cherishing and self-grasping. They are like a knot around our mind. We need to apply both method and wisdom in order to untie this knot of self-cherishing and self-grasping.

Whatever we are trying to achieve always depends on method and wisdom. Even our goals in meditation depend on these two. It is important that we can discern right from wrong. We can then take action, based on the light of wisdom. Our actions must be skilful to be effective. As the verse indicates, this depends upon the method we use and the wisdom we apply. This is the only way we can free ourselves from the knot of self-cherishing and self-grasping.

The next verse says:

Appear Yamantaka, O wrathful protector; I have further entreaties to make of you still.

The meaning is self-explanatory. The author is calling on his wrathful protector, Yamantaka, and telling him that he has further requests to make.

The verse continues:

This sack of five poisons, mistakes and delusions, Drags us down in the quicksand of life's daily toil – Cut it off, cut it off, rip it to shreds!

Our worldly existence, which in Sanskrit is 'samsara', is like a sack filled with the filthy mud of our delusions and karma. The term 'worldly existence' or 'samsara' refers to the contaminated aggregates that constitute our existence, and these aggregates are both mental and physical. Samsara is not something external to us, but exists within us. Looking at our physical body, we can see that it is totally subject to suffering. The causes of our samsaric existence are the five poisonous minds of desirous attachment, hatred, ignorance, pride and jealousy; as well as the karma we create through our actions.

The root cause of our mental delusion and negative karma is our attitude of self-cherishing and self-grasping. These negative minds generate the delusions. Our instinctive sense of 'I' is experienced deep within us. We have a strong sense of self and a strong attachment to that self. This is what generates the different types of mental delusions, and these delusions motivate us to take karmic actions which bind us to cyclic existence.

We need to understand how the five poisonous minds affect our attitudes and way of thinking. We have learned that our mental delusions are caused by our attitudes of self-cherishing and self-grasping. We also need to observe how these delusions affect us. For example, how does desirous attachment make us feel? What are our experiences when we generate hatred, pride and jealousy? Likewise, we should understand the opposites of the mental delusions, i.e. non-attachment, non-pride, non-jealousy and so on, and how they influence our feelings of pain, pleasure and happiness. The more we understand our own mind, the less we believe that our feelings are controlled by the outside world.

Our views of other people are also influenced by our deep-seated sense of 'I'. We are attached to people we regard as our friends and being on our side, and those not on our side as enemies. With a strong sense of 'I', we can also easily feel pride about our own wealth and knowledge. Furthermore, there is often ignorance in our mind, when we are confused about what is right and wrong. Also, out of desirous attachment, we may view something harmful as beneficial and be influenced by it. So we really need to understand how both the negative and positive states of mind affect us. Knowing that the five delusions are the source of our daily problems, and applying this in our daily meditation practice will be of

benefit to us in this life and will lead to a better rebirth in the future.

We know that there is no happiness and no inner peace when we are under the influence of desirous attachment. It is not enough to just have a theoretical understanding of this, but to apply it in practice. The purpose of meditation is to reduce and eventually root out all such mental delusions. It is important to recognise that every mental delusion is a faulty state of mind and brings us harm. If we don't fully appreciate the faults of the mental delusions, then we won't seriously try to overcome them in our meditation practice.

All suffering and restlessness arises in our minds because of these deluded states. We need to get rid of them in order to be happy and at peace. Allowing these delusions to persist will create the cause for future suffering and unhappiness. As Shantideva said, the more we give in to the inner enemy of mental delusions, the more we bring suffering and problems into our life.

With an external enemy we can do something to please them and win them over. However, we have to do the opposite with our inner enemies – we need to destroy and eradicate them. As soon as we recognise that our suffering or pain is not caused by something external, but by a deluded state of mind, we should make an effort to remedy it. This can be done by learning the specific antidote to the delusion and applying it in our meditation practice.

We can't expect our anger or desirous attachment to stop immediately or forever. Getting rid of these delusions permanently requires hard work over a long period of time. The benefit of coming into contact with the Dharma is that, whenever we become a victim of our own mind, we can at least apply the appropriate meditation. We can counteract the delusion as it arises so it will be less of a problem. If we don't apply the remedy, then the delusion will cause chronic harm to our mind.

Our spiritual practice helps us be more self-sufficient and self-guided. It teaches us to understand ourselves and to know and recognise the qualities we need to develop. It also helps us to recognise our faults and weaknesses, and how to get rid of them. In making the effort to minimise our faults and increase our good qualities, we will inevitably encounter hindrances. It is important to be more tolerant and to voluntarily accept these difficulties and hardships. This then becomes a further means to diminish faults and increase our positive inner qualities.

We will now chant the Buddha's mantra seven times. Sit in a comfortable meditation position, remove all distracting thoughts and still the mind. As we begin chanting, focus the mind on the chanting:

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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