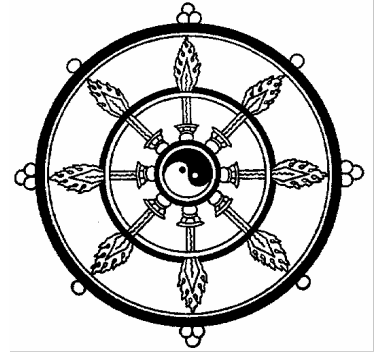


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

ཨྲ སྤྱིང་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



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As usual, we will do a few minutes breathing meditation. Please choose the sitting posture that best suits you, making sure that your body is fully relaxed.

The purpose of doing this meditation is to achieve calmness in the mind. After assuming the sitting posture, you should check up on your state of mind. If it is in a distracted and unsubdued state, you should try to get rid of it. Why? Because with that mind it is not possible to be calm and happy. The reason you are doing this meditation practice is to transform this unsubdued and distracted state of mind into a peaceful one.

The next thing is to recognise that this agitated state of mind is caused by external objects of distraction. So try to get rid of these objects of distraction from the mind, and try to rest the mind within, rather than letting it wander after external objects. Then you can begin the breathing meditation, in which you simply focus the mind on the in-breath and out-breath, not getting distracted by outer objects.

When we engage in meditation practice, we become our own protector, friend and guide. The purpose of meditation is not just to find some momentary peace and relaxation. Rather, the purpose should be to develop more wisdom knowledge, a sharper sense of discrimination. Spiritual practice and meditation aim to diminish the negative qualities of the mind and increase the positive. In meditation practice, it is important that your focus is on your own mind. Based on this, you can make progress by getting rid of whatever negativities you have in your mind and trying to develop the positive qualities as much as possible.

The knowledge and skills that we generate through meditation practice are like our own inner guru or inner teacher that we can discover within. The outer teacher's role is that of showing us the right directions to this [inner teacher]. True Dharma or true spiritual qualities are something that lies within each of us; through meditation practice, we are able to cultivate these good skills and knowledge. So when we say that Dharma is a refuge, we should understand this in the context of how the good qualities that one generates within one's mind serve as the actual refuge or protection. If you have cultivated these qualities, you can remove a great deal of problems and suffering in your life. When we say that we are practising the noble Dharma, it is important to understand that true Dharma practice is enhancing and cultivating these qualities within oneself.

Now we will continue with the discussion on the thought

transformation text, *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*. The first two lines of verse 57 read:

We have high expectations of speedy attainments,
Yet do not wish to work at the practice involved.

The meaning of these lines is self-explanatory. They indicate that there is a gap between what we wish to achieve and the effort required – while our wish may be great, our effort is small. We can relate this to our spiritual practice. In following the stages of the path [to enlightenment], we may have a strong aspiration to achieve all the stages of the path and all the realisations very quickly. However, the amount of effort and the length of time we put into practising these stages are very small. Therefore, it is not realistic to expect that we will experience all the realisations and make such progress on the path.

We can also apply this to worldly pursuits. The magnitude of the goal determines the size of the effort and length of time we have to devote to our efforts in order to achieve that goal; if we do not make this effort and devote the time, we cannot achieve it. This is just a matter of cause and effect. If we want to achieve something, we must meet all the causes and conditions.

In terms of spiritual practice, if you follow the tantric path to enlightenment – which the teachings say is the quickest path – you have to meet the causes and conditions. It is not a quick path if you do not make the extra effort required to accumulate merit and remove all obscurations. Taking the quick path requires us to make a more forceful, greater effort so that we can accumulate merit and remove all obscurations. If we do not do this, we cannot achieve our goal quickly.

For example, if you wanted to make a huge amount of money within one month, the only way you could do it would be to work harder and work longer hours, and have strong motivation and determination. The greater or higher the goal we set our mind to, the greater the effort, motivation and determination we require to achieve it quickly and be successful.

However, in spiritual practice, it is generally better to think of making steady progress along the spiritual path, rather than feeling the need to make rapid progress. Then you will know that, even if progress doesn't happen that quickly, it doesn't matter. You can motivate yourself to make a consistent effort, and try to make step-by-step progress. We should practice Dharma or the spiritual teachings by trying to integrate our practice into our everyday actions and thoughts, and not see our

practice as something separate. Through making a consistent effort, we can make more progress.

The text then reads (verse 57 continued):

We have many fine projects we plan to accomplish,
Yet none of them ever are done in the end.

If we take this in the context of our spiritual pursuits, we should resolve not to be like some students in Tibet who join a big monastery to study the great scholastic Dharma texts and scriptures. Then, before they have finished this study, they think they will join a tantric school, believing that this is more profound than the Gelug-pa path. Of course, then they are not able to complete the tantric goals, so they decide to go up a mountain to do retreat in a cave. At the end of this, they come down the mountain not having achieved anything.

The same thing happens with our worldly pursuits. In undertaking education or completing a course, some people keep changing courses. In the end, they will not have fully completed any course, and will not have achieved any full qualification. As the famous Indian master Shantideva said, whatever task you decide to do, at the beginning you should first decide whether to undertake that task or not. You should thoroughly check whether you can achieve or accomplish that task by considering various factors, consulting various sources, using your knowledge, and so on. After considering all of this, if you find that you have all the suitable factors, you should complete it, and not move to another task.

In this way, success will come naturally. If you finish the first stage of whatever you have set out to do, when you reach the next stage, you will find it much easier to accomplish. This means that you are more likely to achieve the subsequent stage, and so on, making real progress.

On the contrary, if we do not achieve the first stage, we most likely won't achieve the next stage. Furthermore, if we don't do something about this, we can develop the bad habit of not completing whatever we start. Not only does this affect this life's success in terms of achieving what we want to achieve, but it can also affect a future lifetime, in which we may carry this habit of not completing what we have started.

If we try many different things, but do not really achieve any one thing in our life, in the end all the effort we have put into our life can become a source of depression, disappointment, or frustration. Every time we look back at what we have done, it will be like counting our failures. This putting oneself down can be the cause of poor self-esteem. Therefore, as Shantideva said, it is important that we consider all the factors involved before we commence anything we set out to do, and as much as possible fulfill those factors. It is also important to maintain a commitment to achieving the goal. Committing oneself and making the effort to see things through is very important.

The next half of this verse indicates that even if our desire is great, the effort we make to fulfill that desire is always weak. We undertake many activities, but in the end none are successful. The main cause of this is the

self-centred mind or self-cherishing mind, of which the next says:

Trample him, trample him, dance on the head
Of this treacherous concept of selfish concern.
Tear out the heart of this self-centred butcher
Who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

This is a repetition of the lines in the preceding verse. We will leave tonight's teaching here.

Now we will chant the Buddha's mantra seven times. Once again, as in the beginning of this session, we will sit in the meditation posture and, as we begin chanting, we will focus the mind on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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