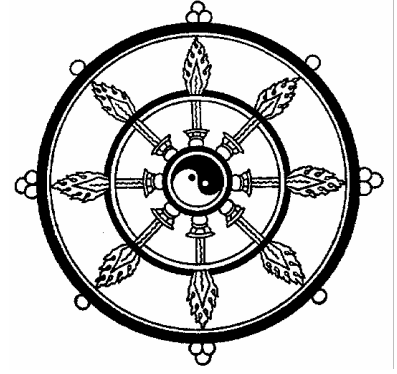


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

འདྲེན་སྐྱོད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



14 July 1999

First of all, we will do some breathing meditation together. Please sit in a comfortable posture.

External, physical rest is not enough to make us content. We can only find true peace and happiness from within the mind. First, we need to know how to bring about inner peace and happiness. This involves understanding the mind through observing and analysing how it works.

As we observe the mind and the various thoughts arising within it, we can clearly discern certain thought patterns that we normally don't even notice. These thoughts are, in fact, the source of our inner restlessness and disturbance. Generally, these are thoughts that wander uncontrollably after external objects or events. It is important to understand that when such thoughts are present, even if we find a peaceful external environment, we will enjoy no peace of mind.

The purpose of meditation is to train our mind to function more positively. Meditation practice breaks down negative ways of thinking and replaces them with positive ones. We do this by repeatedly training and disciplining the mind.

Could we please begin this breathing meditation. First, try to remove all thoughts of external objects, and bring the mind fully inward. We begin the meditation by focusing the mind on the in-breath and out-breath, making sure any other object does not distract the mind.

We are going to continue the discussion of the thought transformation text called *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*. Verse 60 reads:

We are experts at flattering others for favours,
Yet always complaining, we are sad and depressed.
The money we have gathered we cannot bear to part
with;
Like misers we hoard it and feel we are poor.

The meaning of these lines is self-explanatory. However, they also imply that we should avoid wrong means of livelihood. We should avoid acquiring goods and services from others by flattering them.

This relates to the motivation or thought behind our actions. If, motivated by the thought of acquiring wealth from others, we praise them using nice words, then whatever goods we acquire from them is a form of wrong livelihood.

It is also wrong to acquire things through indirect means with a selfish or hypocritical motivation. You might indicate something to others that causes them to provide you with an object or service. For example, in the past

someone may have given you something with the intention of you returning it or returning the favour. You might later say to them that what they had given you was very beneficial and helpful. So they unintentionally give it to you unconditionally. Acquiring goods in such a way is wrong livelihood.

These lines also refer to how competent we are at acquiring and protecting wealth. For instance, we know how to deceive others and think up different plans and actions to make money. Further, our knowledge about securing our wealth is also quite extensive. We know to put our money in the bank because it is secure, and about the different ways of investing money in property, and so on. We even invest our money in such a way that no one but us knows how much wealth we have invested.

However, our possessions end up giving us no sense of contentment or satisfaction. No matter how much we may have, we feel as if we don't possess anything. Rather, the mind always wants to have more, to have the best.

On top of this, when it comes to utilising our possessions, we are miserly and stingy. For instance, we do not share our wealth with the poor or make offerings to the holy objects of refuge. Even if you are a religious person, you may not think about it. This verse asks: what is the underlying cause of this attitude? The following lines indicate that it is the self-cherishing attitude within us:

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.

If we put all these lines together and relate them to our practice, they are saying that the self-cherishing mind is the cause of our continual problems. On the other hand, the mind that cherishes other beings can be a cause to bring more satisfaction and meaning to our lives.

The lines cited earlier mention the problem of not finding any satisfaction with our material possessions. This is because we hold onto this strong self-centred mind. If you have a strong egoistic mind, you will experience unending problems and fear, because your mind will always be worried about yourself. Even if you are wealthy, you worry about whether you have enough money. Your self-cherishing mind can cause you to think in a narrow way, preventing you from enjoying life. As said before, even if you have material wealth and possessions, you don't take advantage of them, let alone think of sharing them with others.

If you examine the effects of this self-cherishing mind, you can recognise its faults. An obvious fault is that we are not able to satisfy ourselves with the wealth and good conditions we possess. Even after we have accumulated money through hard work, the money then becomes another source of dissatisfaction when we become a slave to it. This is because of the self-cherishing mind. In fact, the money we make is supposed to serve us, and not vice versa.

We must understand that the self-cherishing mind is a hindrance to achieving our wishes, whereas the mind of cherishing others can fulfil our wishes. It all depends on your attitude. For instance, if you would like to be a better person, the only way to do this is to cultivate a mind that is not completely self-centred, that has a sense of caring about others.

If you cultivated this mind of cherishing others - which is opposite to the self-cherishing mind - you would change into a friendlier, more caring person. You would begin to make full use of all your possessions and knowledge. With a less self-centred mind you would share, because your mind would be more content. When you are content, you can make the best use of whatever you possess for yourself and for those near to you.

We have discussed this only briefly - we could go into much greater detail about the shortcomings of the self-cherishing mind. For instance, it can destroy your life and be a source of misery. Through the self-cherishing mind, you can become completely isolated and feel rejected by others. The one responsible for this is no other than the self-cherishing mind, which feeds these thoughts.

We all have a sense of fear and worry about our health and financial security. This is mainly caused by this self-cherishing mind. Until the end of this life, there will be no end to the problems, fear, and insecurity it will cause us. It is important to understand that sometimes this fear and insecurity is projected by this self-centred mind.

Of course, we have to be realistic about our situation. In terms of our health and finances, there are certain things that we can and should do. But no matter what we do, we will always find something to worry about that prevents us from enjoying our day to day life. We have to overcome this insecurity and unnecessary fear and worry.

For instance, when we reach the age of retirement, we are no longer able to earn much money. You may calculate your investments against your estimated lifespan and find that there is not enough. Say that you estimate your life to go for 85 years or so, but you may only have enough money to last you up to 80 years of age [Geshe-la laughs]. You may not have enough money for the five or so remaining years, and there is no way that you will be able to earn more.

Some people worry their whole life about that 'last five years'. But remember that what you have projected is just a guess - you do not know what the future holds for you. It is more beneficial to try and overcome worries about the future, and just try to enjoy your life now, thinking of how each day is precious.

Make each day happy and enjoyable. Think that because you will have no trouble finding food today, you have no real problems. Adopt that kind of attitude. Then, if you live a very happy life over the next twenty years and live on after that, you can guarantee that there won't be problems.

We need to understand that this strong self-cherishing mind results in us experiencing more fear, worry, and so on. Worrying is not a positive or healthy response when we face a difficulty or problem. Instead, it becomes an additional cause of problems.

In fact, it can cause worse problems, because with a worried mind, we cannot be happy and enjoy life. You should ask yourself does this way of thinking help you? Does it give you a solution, or teach you, or give you good advice? Does worrying about money increase your money or not? If it did increase your money, it would be wrong to give such advice and tell people not to worry!

It is important to always try and maintain a relaxed state of mind, whatever the situation. More important than worrying is finding happiness in our lives, which depends on us adopting the right state of mind. Train your mind day by day, and see if you can maintain a positive state of mind - if you do it one day, it is possible to do it the next. If you try and maintain a relaxed and worry-free mind for one month, then you can do it for two months. If you can do that for a year, then you can do it for two years, and so on.

Generally, if we can maintain a relaxed attitude, it makes it a lot easier to deal with the various situations we encounter in our lives. On the other hand, if we always worry, it makes it harder to cope with difficult situations.

We may find ourselves facing 'no win' situations where, even if we worry and try to do something to overcome the problems, there are still more problems. For example, we may plan to do a course but find reasons to worry about not being able to complete it. When we actually do the course we may find that there are other difficulties, but they are different from what we feared. And we may still worry about other difficulties we imagine in the future.

The cycle of problems seems continual, but the cause is always this self-cherishing mind. It is the self-cherishing mind that brings worry to us. And it is the self-cherishing mind that discourages us from taking the steps we must take to solve our problems.

We will leave the teaching here and, as usual, finish by chanting the Buddha's mantra seven times. We should sit in the meditation posture and just relax the body and the mind, overcoming all distracting thoughts. We should then try to focus the mind single-pointedly on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

Transcribed from the tapes by Rita Feldmann

Edited by Mary-Lou Considine

Edit checked against the tapes by Dianne McDonald

Edited Version

© **Tara Institute**
