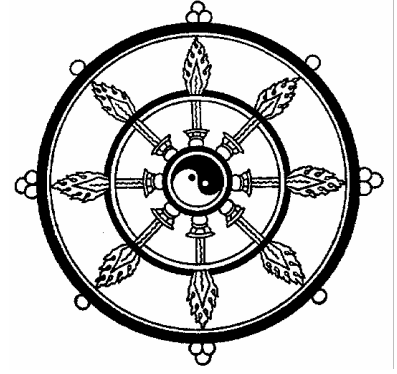


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

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As usual, first we'll do some breathing meditation. Choose a comfortable sitting posture and relax your body.

If there are any thoughts of external objects, try to get rid of them and rest the mind fully within. One should try to let the mind remain peacefully within for a little while, without holding onto any object. Then, before it begins to wander after external objects, discipline it by engaging in breathing meditation. During this meditation, just focus the mind on the incoming and outgoing breath. If we practice meditation regularly, we will find it very beneficial.

We will now continue our discussion on the text *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*. Verse 61 says:

We have done very little to benefit someone,
Yet always remind him how much we have done.
We have never accomplished a thing in our lifetime
Yet, boasting and bragging, we are filled with conceit.

This line clearly shows the way we usually think. Even if we haven't done much for other people - whether they be teachers, students, or friends - we always remind them about how much we have done and try to make a big deal about it, even if we have done very little for them. Similarly, we always are filled with pride about ourselves, in terms of our knowledge and the quality of the skills we possess. But if we check properly and look within, we will not find so many worthy spiritual or worldly qualities to feel proud about.

Following the above lines the same verse reads:

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 last part shows us the cause of this faulty attitude. The main cause is that we always think that our giving help to others is a big deal. We feel that what we have done - even if it is very little - is so great that we have an expectation that others should feel grateful to us. If they do not show gratitude for the little help we've given them, we can easily be disappointed. Further, if the person who you've helped does something wrong to you, you become mad at them. You decide that you'll never help them again, and think about how ungrateful and unappreciative they are of your help, and so on.

When we think about it, we are not consistent in the way we help others. We may help someone this year, but next year we may cause that same person problems and even

hate them. The cause of this is the strong self-cherishing mind or self-centred view. Because this mind is so strong, even if the help we give others is very little, it becomes a big thing in our mind, and we expect much appreciation for that help.

On the other hand, if we replace this self-cherishing mind with the mind that cherishes other beings, we feel instead that it is natural to help others and not anything great or special. Even if we do something significant, we won't think about ourselves as having done something great for others. By cultivating this mind of cherishing other beings, we can unconditionally benefit others extensively without expecting any words of gratitude. We do not make others feel uncomfortable in any way about the help we give them.

The fault of the self-cherishing mind is that we have strong pride in the qualities we believe we possess. Even if we don't possess great qualities and knowledge and so on, we still feel proud about having them! All this we must recognise as the fault of the self-cherishing mind. As the text says here, you have to eliminate this self-cherishing mind:

Trample him, trample him, dance on the head
Of this treacherous concept of selfish concern.

To relate this to your own situation, you should investigate the effects of these two minds - the self-cherishing mind and the mind of cherishing other beings - in your day-to-day life and in your interactions with others. As we investigate, we should try to weigh up which one influences us to act in a way that leads us to fulfil our goals.

First, think of the effect of the self-cherishing mind. Its effect is to make us view ourselves as the most precious, above all other beings, and the centre of the world. Of course, there is nothing wrong with thinking about ourselves as important, as deserving of goodness and benefit - we deserve the right to experience goodness.

But, as well as making you think that you are very precious, the self-cherishing mind gives you the wrong view about benefiting yourself. The self-cherishing mind influences you to think that what you want is independent of other people. Realistically, this is a wrong way of thinking. We cannot accomplish our goals without depending on others. Even getting the things we want for ourselves depends on others. Therefore, it is essential that we consider and understand other beings. In terms of personal peace, security, and happiness, even one other person disliking you can put your own

happiness at risk.

When we talk about overcoming this self-cherishing mind, we are not talking about ignoring what is beneficial to us. Rather, we need to get rid of this self-cherishing mind and cultivate the mind of cherishing other beings for our own peace of mind, so that we can live a reasonable and happy life.

Based on our own experience and on our observations of others, we know that the mind of cherishing others can contribute to the peace and happiness of one's own life and of the lives of others. When you cultivate that mind, it brings other people close to you. From that mind peace arises, flowing from one person to flourish in the minds of others, creating harmony. On the contrary, the moment the mind of self-cherishing starts to take over your mind and actions, all the things that support your life - peace, friendship, and harmony - get destroyed.

We all know what we want out of life. For instance, we wish to have many friends around us and enjoy our time with our friends. Having harmonious friendships and being accompanied by a good friend makes us feel happier and more at peace than just having material wealth and the things it can bring.

Therefore, from our own side at least, we must cultivate a feeling of closeness towards other beings, not necessarily based on giving them material things, but rather doing something for them. Think about how you appreciate and enjoy even just having a cup of tea with someone you are close to. With that feeling accompanying you, whatever you do together brings a great deal of peace and joy to your mind. If there are no close and loving feelings between you and the other person, you won't enjoy your time together.

So, more important than giving material support is learning how to truly show love and affection to each other, so that you can both feel good. For example, when we pat animals like cats and dogs, they will show affection to their owners. By wagging their tails or licking you, they are showing their affection, and you can feel it.

As human beings, we also have the potential to show love and compassion to other beings, especially to those who are close to us. By doing this, not only are we contributing peace and happiness to other beings, but we are also living in a state of peace, happiness, and harmony.

We will leave tonight's teaching here and, as usual, we will chant the Buddha's mantra seven times. As at the start of this session, try to sit in the meditation posture, calming your mind and bringing it inward. When you begin the chanting, rather than being distracted, try to keep the mind focused on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

*Transcribed from the tapes by Rita Feldmann
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