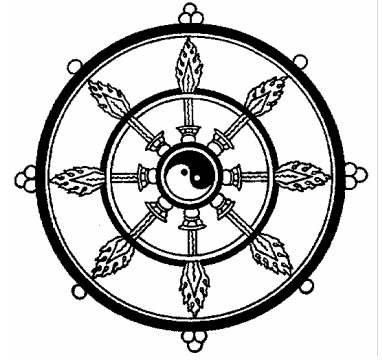


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

འཇིགས་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



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We will do a few minutes breathing meditation first. Please choose the most comfortable sitting posture, making sure that your body is fully at rest.

The feeling of being rested or not depends more on getting mental rest than on getting physical rest. If we physically rest and the mind roams all over the place, it becomes occupied with disturbing thoughts that disturb our physical relaxation. The way to rest the mind is to make sure that it is within, as close as possible to where we are.

We must realise the benefit of disciplining or controlling the mind. We have the idea that we should just let the mind be free and let it go, exposing it to all kind of ideas and objects. The idea of restraining our thoughts seems like sacrificing a freedom. So we need to examine what happens if we don't control the mind.

If we don't control the mind, it will go after all sorts of objects, and be influenced by all sorts of thoughts. The mind generates many thoughts and is preoccupied by many objects. If we check up, we can see that these objects are not worthwhile and lead to wrong ways of thinking. To engage in meditation practice, we must see the benefit of disciplining the mind, which is the purpose of meditation practice.

We have to know what effect a particular thought can have on us and our state of mind. For instance, if it is occupied by gross objects, we may not be able to sleep. This is because we can only go to sleep when the mind is withdrawn [from gross objects] and takes on a subtler form. Through meditation practice, we bring the mind inward by removing outgoing thoughts. When we do this, our mind becomes subtler, in the sense of not being influenced by gross forms, or external objects. When we experience this more subtle form of mind, there is more peace within us and the mind becomes clearer, sharper, and more peaceful.

With practice, we can eventually achieve the meditative state called 'calm abiding' - a state of single-pointed concentration or stabilisation of the mind. Then, we can also accomplish the meditative state of special insight. All these meditative attainments become possible through overcoming the gross states of mind that prevent us experiencing the deeper, more subtle states of mind within each of us.

To begin the breathing meditation, try to remove all outgoing thoughts and stabilise the mind like steel within. Then begin the breathing meditation, directing your concentration to the in-breath and out-breath and

trying to prevent distractions. If they do occur, try to remove them.

It is more beneficial to do regular meditation practice than to worry too much about the length of each session.

We will now do the teaching on verse 62 from the text *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*, which reads:

We have many great masters and teachers to guide us,
Yet, shirking our duty, ignore what they teach.
We have many disciples, yet do not ever help them;
We cannot be bothered to give them advice.

This verse refers to the relationship between spiritual teachers and their disciples or students. It implies that whatever religious school you follow, you must depend upon a teacher to show you the teachings. Generally, a teacher is someone who guides you.

As a student, it is important that you follow, pay respect to, and honor your teachers. Establishing a good relationship with the teacher is the foundation for making progress along the spiritual path. For beings with low or dull mental faculties, it is better to rely on fewer teachers. Instead, they should focus on choosing the right teacher with the right qualifications.

A teacher should have many qualifications. The most important are knowledge and a feeling of genuine love and compassion for you [the student]. For a teacher following the teachings of Mahayana Buddhism, or the Greater Vehicle, having these qualities and having more knowledge than the student are especially important. He or she should have a genuine thought of love and compassion, and of benefiting the student. The teacher should be more concerned about benefiting others than about benefiting him- or herself. The teacher should also be more concerned about future lives than about this life. Whoever you adopt as a teacher must have these qualifications.

The advantage of having fewer teachers is that one has fewer responsibilities, commitments, and pledges to keep. On the other hand, if you have many teachers, you are likely to break some of the pledges and commitments - and find it more difficult to fulfill the advice and guidelines - given to you by your teachers. As a student, the most important thing is that, as much as possible, you put into practise whatever you are taught, maintaining pure faith and respect towards the teacher.

A spiritual teacher also needs to have certain qualifications and carry out certain responsibilities. The

teacher's role is to totally benefit others with no selfish purpose. With this essential qualification, the teacher should take care of the student in such a way that the student benefits and makes progress. If the teacher lacks these qualifications and does not fulfill his or her responsibilities, the relationship will not be meaningful, or beneficial, especially for the students.

As a teacher, your role is to benefit your students in terms of giving Dharma, even giving material aid and personal instructions to them. When you benefit your students in these different ways, you are doing what the scriptures instruct - that the spiritual teacher must possess kindness in terms of giving Dharma and material aid. If somebody who you consider to be your teacher, doesn't possess these three [types of generosity] - if he or she is not giving you pure Dharma, or benefiting you in some way - then this teacher does not possess any kindness. Just because some people call themselves a teacher, it doesn't automatically qualify them as one, especially if they lack the qualities of a spiritual teacher mentioned in the texts.

Geshe Doga says that at this very moment he is playing the role of the teacher - teaching himself rather than you! He would like to mention that perhaps he doesn't have all the qualities mentioned before. But you can be assured that it is out of a motivation of wholesome love and compassion for others that he tries to do his best to give spiritual teachings and give help to others.

As well as the qualities mentioned, we need to know all the ways by which a teacher can benefit others. It is also important for the teacher to understand the students' pre-dispositions and needs - to know their level of knowledge, interest, and experience. It is important for the teacher to benefit the students by giving teachings that satisfy their real needs.

Some teachers lack the skills or qualifications to guide students - for instance, they may be more concerned with themselves, or have the wrong motivation of gathering as many students as possible in order to become famous, wealthy, or enhance their reputation as teachers. Because these teachers are exploiting and manipulating their students from a selfish purpose, they just let their students do whatever they want to do. Instead of showing students what is the right path and what is the wrong path, the teacher does not give any good advice, causing harm to the students. Such a teacher-student relationship has no benefit whatsoever.

That's all for the teaching tonight. Now we will chant the Buddha's mantra seven times. As before, try and sit in the meditation posture and focus the mind inward. Then, as you chant the mantra, focus your mind on it, not getting distracted by any outer object.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNIYE SOHA

*Transcribed from the tapes by Rita Feldmann
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