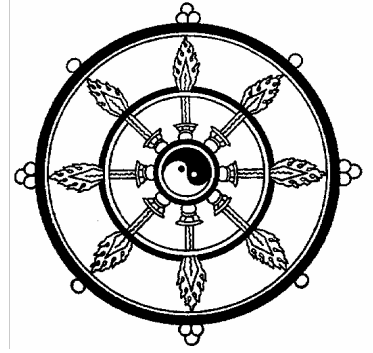


# Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

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First, we will do a few minutes breathing meditation. Sit in a comfortable meditation posture and relax your body. As well as choosing the correct posture - making sure that we are fully relaxed, with no tension or pain - we need to understand the real purpose of meditation.

Meditation is not just a period of physical rest, but a process of training the mind. [In Tibetan], the term 'meditate' means to familiarise, or to get used to. When we train the mind, we are directing it onto a virtuous or wholesome object, allowing it to get used to that object. Through this process, we are breaking down negative mental habits and trying to develop positive mental habits and behaviour.

It is important to discipline the mind. If you do not discipline your mind, you will find that it becomes distracted. With distracting thoughts in the mind, even if you are physically resting, your mind does not feel rested. So first you have to remove all distracting thoughts from your mind, and let it rest within you.

Before we begin this specific meditation, which is the breathing meditation, we have to make sure that the mind stays on the in-breath and out-breath by removing all distracting thoughts. In other words, we have to bring the mind fully within. After bringing the mind within and letting it remain there for a while, we have to direct it onto the process of breathing in and out, before it gets distracted by outside objects.

It is important that your meditation practice has a significant impact on your mind and your life. We should aim to achieve long-lasting results. The results of meditation should not just be limited to feeling peaceful at the time of doing the practice. It is more beneficial to experience the effects of our practice after we meditate - for example, enjoying a calmer state of mind or having more mental and emotional stability.

The aim of meditation is to minimise those states of mind or types of emotions that bring unhappiness and disturb the mind. This requires us to know which emotions can harm us. For instance, we may undergo suffering because of unfulfilled desire, or because of anger. We call these states of mind the afflictive emotions or mental delusions. The purpose of meditation practice is to overcome these negative states of mind. If we have a good understanding of the purpose of meditation practice, and of how to apply meditation practice to our lives, we can eradicate our mental delusions, which are the source of discomfort and unhappiness.

The actual meditation practice that you do will depend

on the negative state of mind you wish to overcome. Say that you wanted to overcome a feeling of unfulfilled desire, because it caused you continuous suffering. Overcoming this is simple. First, you need to understand why desire is always present in your mind, and why it seems to become progressively stronger. One reason is that your mind is always centred on whatever object or factor has aroused desire. To break out of this habit of continuous desire, you need to familiarise your mind with some object of non-desire.

It is just a simple matter of cause and effect that the more your mind gets used to an object of non-desire, the less influenced it becomes by an object of desire. This is how you could slowly diminish the desire that had caused you problems. If somebody who meditates has a good understanding of the meditation technique and applies a practice accordingly, then naturally they will get a result. When you benefit like this, you feel more inspired and more confident in your practice, and will make consistent progress.

Now we will continue our discussion on the thought transformation text called *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*. We are up to verse 64. The first four lines say:

We have read very little, heard only a few teachings,  
Yet talk with authority expertly on voidness.  
Our knowledge of scriptures is pitifully lacking,  
Yet glibly we make up and say what we like.

Some people who may have some understanding of Dharma, or who have heard about Dharma, or who have contemplated some Dharma topics may, in fact, only have a meagre knowledge of Dharma. However, rather than thinking that their knowledge is limited, they may be proud of how much they know, and how much they have studied. If other people ask them questions about Dharma, they would not give the right answers or, even worse, give a wrong answer and lie to others.

For instance, if people who were not familiar with Dharma asked such a person a question, he or she may just reply with a few words or may not give the full or even real answer to the question. However, if the person asking the question had a lot of knowledge and experience of Dharma practice, the other person might reply that "there is no point in asking too many questions". In other words, he or she is avoiding giving an answer because he or she does not know how to answer the question!

To take an example, you might reply to someone's question: "Enlightenment is just a realisation of your

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mind – it means that when you completely empty your mind of all thoughts, you will achieve enlightenment”. In this way you will tell a lie to them. The above verse reminds us that our knowledge of the scriptures is pitifully lacking, and that, consequently, our understanding of Dharma is limited.

Lacking such knowledge, when it comes to teaching others, you will teach whatever comes into your mind. You may try to teach in a way that pleases you, like telling a blatant lie to others. Your motivation may just be to impress other people. But you lack a knowledge of Dharma, in the sense that you cannot authoritatively explain even one topic to others. Rather, you may have a distorted knowledge of many different topics. To impress others, instead of focusing on one particular topic, you may try to teach bits from the various Dharma subjects that you have studied. The motivation behind this may be to further your reputation in order to receive some kind of reward from others.

The next lines in the text say:

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 means that the cause of having limited Dharma knowledge - and of engaging in actions such as lying to others about Dharma and using Dharma to promote yourself - is the self-centred mind. These lines are saying that it is important to recognise the self-cherishing or self-centred mind as the root cause of these problems, and that we should try to overcome it.

We will leave the teaching here. If any of you have a question, please feel free to ask it.

*Question:* I have read somewhere that the greatest sins are created by our mind, not by our body. Please explain.

*Answer:* It is obvious that even our negative physical actions depend on the mind. Further, because it is easier to create negative mental actions than physical ones, we have the potential to create more negative mental actions. For instance, right now we could think about killing one hundred people, but physically that would not be easy for us.

Just as it is easy to create many negative mental actions, it is also easier for us to create many positive actions and accumulate a great amount of merit by mind. We have to see the positive side of this - how the mind has tremendous potential to accumulate great merit very quickly.

For instance, if you cultivated compassion in the mind and directed that compassion towards as many beings as possible, at that moment you would accumulate a great amount of merit. This is in line with the Lord Buddha's saying that "you are the master of our own self - who else can be your master?" This means that the mind is the most influential and powerful part of yourself, and that all your actions are derived from the mind.

Most of the problems that we encounter in life are created and caused by the mind. Other than the mind,

there is no real cause of these problems. Sometimes, we may even feel unhappy or discontented with a close friend. You may feel that the friend you have is not good enough, and even wish for another friend.

There is no limit to the mind's desires. It is important to control the mind because, even though there is no limit to the mind's desires, there is a limit to our resources and capabilities. Most of our problems are caused by this gap between what our mind desires, and our capacity to achieve it.

This is why we must understand how our mind can unnecessarily cause many problems. If we examine the mind, we will see certain types of thought that can bring unhappiness or remind us of some past sadness. These types of thought are best forgotten. When they arise, if you remember to stop them and put the thought or object out of the mind, it has the good effect of allowing you some peace and inner stability.

Geshe Doga says that he knows this from his own experience in the monastery, when he had very tough teachers. He remembers that he used to miss his homeland and his parents. Whenever he thought about his parents, he would not want to stay in the monastery, and he would feel sad and unhappy. But when he didn't think about home, he could enjoy the monastery and his time there.

Geshe-la says he used to clearly imagine every detail about his parents, such as what they were doing at a particular time such as meal time, and even where they were sitting. But he says that the longer we leave such an unhappy state of mind unchecked, the more undesirable will your present conditions appear. There are many types of disturbing thought, and it is more beneficial to just put them out of your mind, because this will bring more peace and allow you to enjoy the present moment.

This explains why the type of thought you have in your mind can decide your mood or feelings at that moment.

As usual, we are going to chant the Buddha's mantra seven times. Could you once again sit in the meditation posture and relax, letting go of all distracting thoughts and bringing the mind inward. When we begin the chanting, focus the mind on the mantra without getting distracted by any outer object.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNIYE SOHA

*Transcribed from the tapes by Rita Feldmann*  
*Edited by Mary-Lou Considine*  
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