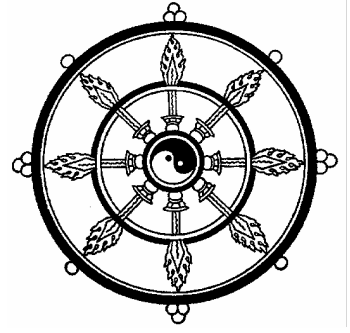


# Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

ཨོ ལྷོ་སྤྱད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



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As usual, we will do some breathing meditation first. Please choose a suitable posture and relax your body.

We should also try to relax the mind, by bringing it fully inward and removing all distracting thoughts. Once we have done this, we can begin the breathing meditation, in which we direct our attention to the in- and out-breath, making sure there are no other thoughts to distract us from this meditation.

We should always remember the benefit of meditation practice, and try to learn how to practise it more effectively. For example, adopting the correct physical posture makes a difference to the success of your meditation practice. The features of a good physical posture include keeping a straight back, and keeping your eyes closed. The eyes should be neither too tightly shut - even though we may find this effective when we begin meditation - because this leads to the fault of mental laxity or dullness; nor should they be opened too widely, as this can cause the mind to be easily distracted. Mental dullness and distraction are two of the main faults in practising meditation.

If our meditation sessions are short, we will not notice the difference that the correct physical posture can make to the success of the practice. Try and see for yourself. If you were to do a meditation practice for a long period of time, and adopted the correct cross-legged posture - with the seven features recommended by the Buddha - it would make your meditation much easier. It would even assist you to achieve the aim of the practice.

What is the main aim of meditation practice? It is to rid or protect the mind from the influence of mental delusions or distractions.

Whenever we engage in meditation practice, we need to isolate ourselves from day-to-day physical and social activities, and distractions such as noise. Additionally, we need to isolate the mind from delusions and distracting thoughts. Our task in meditation is to remain fully focused on the mind. If the mind becomes distracted by another object, we need to try and remove that object from the mind, protecting it from further distraction. We should try to prevent such distractions from the very beginning.

We will continue the teaching from verse 65 of *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*:

We have many attendants and people around us,  
Yet no one obeys us nor heeds what we say.  
We feel we have friends in positions of power,  
Yet should we need help, we are left on our own.

This verse is talking about how, if you were a famous

leader, lama or teacher, you would naturally attract many people to you. However, if you lacked the knowledge and skill to maintain a good relationship with your followers, then no matter how many you had, none of them would pay you any respect or loyalty. Rather, they would consider themselves as your equal, and not heed your advice.

This verse also implies that when people without any position see someone in a position of power or wealth, they think they will get some benefit by befriending the influential person. With such an intention, the person in a lower position may try to please and flatter the other one. However, the influential person may not receive any real support from such 'friends' when they needed it.

The next few lines are saying that holding onto the self-cherishing mind is the cause of not getting a positive response from others. Even if you were someone in a high position with considerable knowledge and qualifications, no one would respect or listen to you if you held onto the self-cherishing mind.

The message is that we should try to develop loving kindness and caring thoughts for others. Regardless of how many people who become close to you, it is important that you open your heart to them, show some care and try to do something for them, instead of always thinking about your own selfish needs.

When people come to us, we can show our care for them through any action that benefits or pleases them. You might give them material support - offer them a cup of tea or a meal, or show them generosity. We should not think that practising generosity is something that only beggars appreciate. Everyone likes to have generosity and free gifts bestowed on them!

If we wish to develop good relationships with others, we need to rely on the support of our own friend or friends. If we do not show genuine love for our close friends, even if we have connections with people all over the world, we cannot count on having a single, true friend. So it may be more beneficial to look for quality, not just quantity, in our friendships.

Again, this requires us to cultivate loving kindness and caring thoughts for others. Even if it is just one other person, try to benefit them in whatever way possible. Try to develop loving kindness for everyone with whom you have a close relationship - if you are a parent, practise this with your children and family. Try to show some care for their well being. In this way, you can develop trusting relationships that will truly benefit others.

Geshe Doga wonders whether anyone has a question to

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ask.

*Question:* There is a conflict between the spiritual life and the worldly life - if one lived a spiritual life out there in the world you would get eaten. How do you find a balance?

*Answer:* Geshe Doga completely agrees with what you say. It is extremely difficult to practice spirituality - there are contradictions between the spiritual and material worlds. Most of us are trained to focus on material development, while the number of people who wholeheartedly practise spirituality is decreasing. This is one aspect.

If you are precise and genuine about practising spirituality, it is not easy. Spiritual practice is not just a matter of outer deeds. For instance, an increase in the number of people visiting temples does not mean that there is an increase in the number of people practising spiritual deeds. Generally, spiritual practice is very hard. You not only have to think about what is going on in the outer world, but you also have to be aware of what is going on in our own mind. We are all trained to pursue material objects and sensual pleasures, which makes spiritual practice difficult.

Despite these reasons for spiritual practice being difficult, we may ask: 'Do we still have the capability within us to practice spirituality?'. We do not need to wait until we have the opportunity and freedom to devote ourselves to spiritual goals before we begin to practise.

The answer to your question also depends on our definition of spiritual practice. We cannot judge whether or not someone is a spiritual practitioner by their outer appearance or actions. However, if we consider spiritual practice as the practice of beneficial deeds - carried out with a motivation of love and compassion for others - then this is true spiritual practice.

We can see modern examples of famous people, such as singers and actors, whose outer deeds may seem mundane. However, they may show great generosity towards the many people in the world who are in need. They may help many other beings through the money they make. True spiritual practice is the act of doing deeds that benefit others.

There are many other people who don't have much wealth, power or position, but who devote their lives to helping the destitute. For instance, they may get involved in fundraising and in community and social activities out of a motivation of love and compassion for people in need. Whether these people are spiritual believers or not, the work they do to benefit others is true spiritual practice.

Material development may discourage us from spiritual pursuits. On the other hand, material development may also be a cause for someone to seek a spiritual path. We have to pay a price for material development and growth - we have to live busier lives, and be prepared for more challenges. Therefore, many people are showing interest in meditation practice as a means to calm their minds and reduce anxiety.

Geshe Doga said he thinks this particularly applies to the business community. If they could find time to learn about meditation practice and the spiritual teachings, they would become interested in these topics.

It is not a case of the spiritual teachings and meditation practice not being relevant to a materially focused world. Rather, most people have not had contact with the spiritual teachings, and do not know about meditation practice. Because they have not had contact with the spiritual teachings, many rich people and businesspersons cannot find answers to their questions. Despite their wealth, such people are no different from anyone else in private life. Many of them inwardly feel a sense of emptiness and confusion. They may ask themselves: 'What have I achieved?'. From all their wealth - usually achieved by working over a long period of time - they may feel that they have not really achieved anything, and feel confused about this.

There are a few businesspersons who have come across the spiritual teachings. Geshe Doga said that he knows of some who use the six or seven hours or so in the plane to do some practice when they are on business trips. They regard this as their leisure time. For many other people, the many hours spent travelling in a plane are just a cause for getting a sore bum! (Geshe-la says that he had the opportunity to fly business class. While many of us may think that this is very special and privileged, personally Geshe Doga found it to be nothing special! He said that maybe there was a slight difference in the meal service, but that was all.)

We will stop here and chant the Buddha's mantra seven times. Again, sit in a meditation posture, try to calm the mind, and focus on the mantra.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNIYE SOHA*

*Transcribed from the tapes by Rita Feldmann  
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