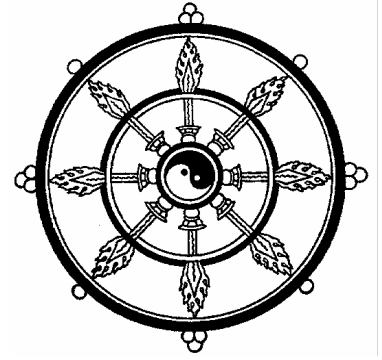


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

འདྲེན་སྐྱོད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



2 September 1999

We will do a few minutes breathing meditation first. Adopt a suitable sitting posture and relax the whole body.

One of the benefits of meditation is to bring more focus, clarity, and energy into the mind. We can achieve this by first of all bringing the mind inward and bringing it under control. When the mind is uncontrolled, it can be easily distracted by outer objects and scattered in many directions. In such a state, the mind has no focus, energy, concentration, or peace. Your mind has tremendous potential. If you realised this potential, your mind would function with more energy, focus, concentration, and so on. Think about this when you sit down to meditate and remove distracting thoughts from the mind.

After we sit down and bring the mind inward, we should start the meditation. Instead of letting the mind be distracted by outer objects, as it usually is, we discipline it by placing the mind on a given object. Here the object is the incoming and outgoing breath. We will do this for the next few minutes.

There are many advantages in having a stable and calm mind. For instance, it is beneficial to undertake even ordinary, everyday activities with a stable mind. So we can understand why we must try to discipline the mind. We may also see many faults in the mind, and our lack of control over it. However, the mind is by nature very flexible, so it can be transformed in different ways, into different forms. If we train the mind to think in a positive way, it will become a habit.

Ordinarily, we view happiness as depending on certain external conditions and factors being gathered together. We feel that, until we have found all these external conditions, we will not be satisfied. Even if one factor is missing, it is enough to deprive us of happiness and satisfaction.

This perception of happiness clearly shows that we have no faith in our own potential. We have no idea about how to find happiness within ourselves. If we follow the spiritual teachings, however, we can achieve happiness within ourselves very quickly, at least within this lifetime. We will see the potential within ourselves to find and sustain happiness and satisfaction, even if some external material factor is missing.

The thought of achieving the state of liberation or complete enlightenment through our spiritual practice is certainly something we can aspire to. But to actually achieve this goal in this lifetime is extremely difficult, even unrealistic. However, if the goal of our spiritual

practice is to live a happy and satisfied life, regardless of external factors, then we can achieve this through our spiritual practice, especially by transforming our way of thinking.

We are now going to read the next verse from the text and discuss it. We are up to verse 66. The first two lines read:

We have gained lofty status and ranks of prestige,
Yet our knowledge is poorer than that of a ghost.

This line emphasises the importance of developing knowledge and acquiring education from an early stage of life. Simply having a high status does not benefit you, unless you have a wealth of knowledge and qualifications. In the past, kings typically acquired their status by inheriting it through their family lineage – if you were the first-born son of a king, you would inherit your father's status and position. In Tibet, if you were recognised as a reincarnation of a lama, you automatically acquired the status of the lama's previous incarnation.

These lines are saying that if you acquire a high status, you need your own knowledge and qualifications to back up that position. If we develop such qualities from a young age, then once we grow older we will have more qualities. For instance, if you start to gain a knowledge of Dharma when you are young, when you reach old age you will have no shortage of spiritual knowledge to teach others and to guide yourself in meditation practice.

The next lines read:

We are considered great gurus, yet even the demons
Do not harbour such hatred or clinging desire

Or as close-minded an outlook as we seem to have.

These lines refer to some lamas, spiritual teachers, gurus, and those with exalted titles such as high lamas, geshe, or recognised spiritual masters who outwardly appear to be great persons. Yet inwardly if they have the three poisonous mind states – desire, hatred, and ignorance – then this is far worse than the same mind state being held by a person considered as being evil.

While the three poisonous states of mind can bring great unhappiness and confusion to us as individuals, when someone with a high title has them, it can bring disharmony between spiritual communities and can also cause other people to criticise the spiritual teachings.

The real cause of disharmony between various spiritual schools is not really because one or other spiritual system is inherently wrong – if you look at all the world's

religions, they are not bad. Who's to blame for making so many people criticise spiritual teachings? Is it the fault of the followers of these religions? If you, as follower of a religion, behaved badly and disparaged other religions, such actions would be completely opposite to the spiritual teachings. An outside observer would think there was something faulty in the teachings you followed, because they caused you to behave in a negative way.

So if someone who held the high title of spiritual master, or even a respected leader in society, inwardly possessed some negative, evil mind, they would be worse off than the worst evil that worldly people could think of. Similarly, in possessing such poisonous states of mind within us, then we are our own worst enemy.

The implication here is that the true teaching of the Lord Buddha is to counteract these three poisonous states of mind within us. Even if we find it difficult to completely eliminate these three poisonous states of mind, it is worth making some effort to minimise them and the negative actions they lead to.

Our spiritual practice should combat, not support, these mental delusions. The more time we spend on spiritual practice and learning about Dharma, the fewer mental delusions we should experience. We need to remind ourselves that the purpose of meditation and Dharma is to diminish the mental delusions.

Our practice can be a cause to increase our delusions. For instance, we might feel jealous about other practitioners' knowledge and meditation experience. Yet, in the past, before we knew anything about meditation, we would not have had such jealousy - we would not have felt bad about seeing other people in meditation practice and making progress in the Dharma. When such a jealous mind arises in us, it is not the fault of the spiritual teachings or of the Dharma. It is your own fault for not applying the Dharma to overcoming that jealous mind.

No matter how much we learn, we can always find out more about the benefit of the Dharma. However, whether you realise that benefit for yourself or not depends upon your own practice of Dharma, not just on studying, learning or increasing your knowledge. To achieve the real purpose of Dharma, we need to reduce our delusions. By reducing delusions, we find more peace and happiness - in another words, we become a more tolerant, happier and joyful person.

We will finish tonight's teaching here. As usual, we will chant the Buddha's mantra seven times. Could you sit in the meditation posture, calm the mind inward, remove all outgoing thoughts, and focus the mind on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNIYE SOHA

*Transcribed from the tapes by Rita Feldmann
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