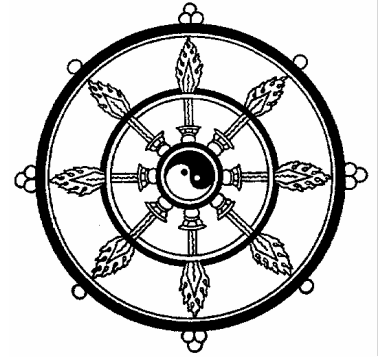


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

ཨོ ལྷོ་སྤྱད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



8 September 1999

The great Tibetan master, Lama Tsongkapa, says that if our mind is positive, then the ground and the path will be positive too.

The implication here is that we should maintain a positive, happy, and peaceful mind. If we look closely, that is our life's true purpose - it is the single most important thing that we can aspire to. We have to remind ourselves how important it is to have a stable, peaceful, and happy mind in finding meaning and satisfaction in life. Only by finding inner peace and happiness can we be in a good position to benefit and serve other living beings.

We must investigate what we have accomplished, and what we wish to accomplish, in our lives. Do these things really bring fulfilment to our lives or not? Is the purpose of our lives to achieve these things and fulfil these desires? If you think about it, there are so many things we have already achieved and possess, and so many things we wish to achieve and possess. If they do not give us some sense of real satisfaction and true benefit, then what is the point in having them?

So, what is the purpose of our lives? Although we may value external accomplishments and objects, we know from our experience of these external things that they do not fully satisfy us. Clearly, the real purpose, the thing that is most beneficial and worthwhile, is having a sense of happiness, peace, and satisfaction within oneself. Anything that brings these qualities to our lives is benefiting us.

If we lack a sense of happiness and peace within ourselves, then no matter how much we accomplish, or how much wealth we possess, it will be meaningless. Despite our success, we will have not achieved the purpose of life. Rather than thinking about external achievements, we should see that the most important achievement lies within oneself - cultivating and stabilising a positive state of mind.

How do we generate this positive state of mind, which is the main cause of inner peace and happiness? We have to focus within ourselves. External things cannot bring about this positive state of mind. We have to cultivate it within ourselves. Mental peace and happiness are the result of the ripening of positive energy generated within the mind. What do we have to do to bring about a more peaceful and happy state of mind? We have to purify or cleanse the mind. Does that mean that there is some stain in the mind?

This raises the question of the nature of the mind. The

fundamental nature of the mind is pure and crystal clear, unpolluted by any stains. The mind's stains - or delusions - are temporary. Since they are temporary and do not stain the basic nature of the mind, we need to understand that they can be separated from the mind.

Basically, our aim is to learn about the benefits of meditation practice. Through meditation, we can achieve more clarity and stability in the mind, and improve our concentration. With a peaceful, stable, and clear mind, you can get more enjoyment out of life, even in day to day activities. If the mind lacks these qualities of inner peace and happiness, however, we won't find any satisfaction or sense of rest, even in our meditation and spiritual practice.

Everything we learn about the spiritual teachings, and the time we spend practising meditation or spirituality, should all be directed at bringing clarity, stability, and peace to the mind. When you notice such qualities in your mind, it is a sign of its cleansing and purification. What we are purifying are the mental delusions or negative states of mind, which cloud the mind and result in a lack of mental stability and clear thinking.

Meditation is about settling the mind within and then stabilising it, making it stay within for a long period of time. As we make progress in our meditation practice, the mind will stay inward for longer periods. As a benefit, our mind will have fewer distractions. In this way, we can develop peace, happiness, and stability.

Keeping in mind the benefits of meditation, we will now do our usual meditation - a few minutes of breathing meditation. Please choose the most comfortable sitting posture. We are trying to remove all outgoing thoughts and let the mind gradually rest within. After having brought the mind within, we will begin the breathing meditation by focusing the mind on the in-breath and out-breath with single-pointed concentration, preventing any outer distractions from occurring. [*Pause for meditation.*]

There's not much time left, so we have two options. First, if anyone has a question, there is room for that. Otherwise, we will do a verse from a text. Does anyone have a question - if possible a question that suits Geshe Doga?!

Question: In the text, *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*, the author uses words like 'trample him', and trample seems a very harsh word. Why do they use such harsh words?

Answer: These teachings are about fighting with an

enemy. Generally, we know that the type of weapon we use depends on the type of enemy we face. If the enemy is very violent and very strong, our weapons also have to be very strong, in this case the use of strong words.

As you said, the words 'trample him, trample him' are harsh. The point of using harsh words is to have an effect on defeating the enemy. Here, there are two enemies - the master and the servant. The 'master' is the wrong view known as the extreme view of self-grasping, the view that the self or the person exists inherently. The 'servant' is the self-cherishing mind, or our self-centred view. When this thought transformation text says 'trample him, trample him' - that 'him' refers to these two, the master and the servant. The weapons or the means that you use to combat these two enemies are mainly the wisdom realising emptiness, and the altruistic mind of enlightenment or bodhicitta.

Even words like 'kill him' - which is also sometimes used in this text - are not talking about killing some external person. Again, it refers to destroying the enemy within us, the self-cherishing mind. As we discussed in the past, this mind is an enemy to us because it prevents us from benefiting others, from showing love and care towards other beings. Because of this enemy of the self-cherishing mind dwelling within us, all the actions we do through our body, speech, and mind are of no benefit to other beings. Further, because of the extreme view of self-grasping, our mind is always under the control of delusions. This brings great harm to our lives, probably the greatest harm we will ever receive.

We need to recognise the self-grasping and self-cherishing minds as our worst enemy. When we understand that they cause all the problems we encounter in life, naturally we will feel the need to destroy them. We must understand that all problems stem from the self-cherishing and the self-grasping minds - problems within ourselves, with other beings, and even between nations.

Delusions such as desire and hatred not only cause you to have conflicts with enemies and strangers, they cause conflict within your own family, and with those who are closely related. You feel desire or attachment towards friends, and hatred towards enemies and those who are distant. Having desire and hatred is the basis of all the problems and struggles we experience in life. If we trace the origin of our desire and hatred, it lies within the self-cherishing mind and self-grasping mind.

Understanding that these two minds are the root cause of our problems is simply a matter of checking up on our experience of the self-cherishing mind and the self-grasping mind. From our experience, we know that because of the deep-seated sense of 'I' conceived of by these two minds, we have a feeling of 'my' or 'mine'. Because of this, we have close feelings for friends, and feel distant from our enemies. Once we truly recognise our inner self-cherishing and self-grasping as being the main cause of our problems, it becomes natural for us to feel hatred and use harsh words in an effort to destroy them, in the same way that we would with someone we perceive as an outer enemy.

To combat these two minds, we have to be fully prepared and ready. The famous Geshe Baen Gung-gyael said that he would guard his mind with a spear [i.e. the antidotes to self-cherishing and self-grasping], waiting in readiness to encounter and combat the enemies facing him - the mental delusions. When the enemy appears to be stronger and more violent, you need to be more alert and vigilant. But if the enemy shows some sign of relaxing, then it means you can relax, but still be alert.

We must never bow down to these enemies. We know that if we bow down to an enemy, it will give them more strength and they will become more powerful. Instead of bowing down, if we show more power and strength, we can weaken the enemy's force. It's important not to become discouraged or to give in. Even a small bird can become brave and approach a snake lying on the ground if they think that it is dead. Likewise, if our enemies perceive us as being weak or defeated, they will take advantage of us, and it will be easier for them to manipulate and exploit us.

So sometimes, even if you lack the greater power, you can pretend to have more power than you actually have to scare the enemy off!

Geshe Doga has a story from when he was studying at Sarnath University in Varanasi, India. He went to the town one day to meet a rinpoche, who was physically a small person. Inside a shop, they encountered an Indian salesman who was very abusive to the rinpoche. The rinpoche lost his temper and slapped the Indian in the face. The salesman got annoyed, grabbed the rinpoche, and tried to snatch off his watch. While this was happening, a mob of people began to gather behind the Indian. Geshe Doga couldn't think of anything else to do but put his hand under his robe and pretend that he had a knife or some other weapon. This actually worked! The man let the rinpoche go and the mob didn't respond. Geshe Doga and the rinpoche went straight back to their college, which was nearby. The rinpoche could not believe that Geshe-la could come up with such an idea!

We will finish the teaching here. As usual, we will chant the Buddha's mantra seven times. Could you once again be seated in the meditation posture and try to relax yourself - that is most important. Try to calm the mind inward and make sure that you just focus the mind on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNIYE SOHA

*Transcribed from the tapes by Rita Feldmann
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