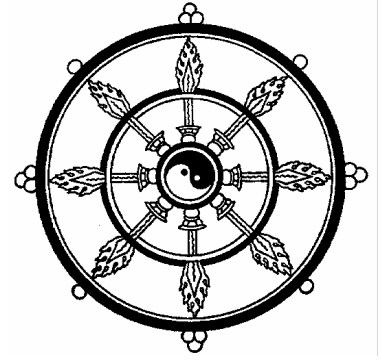


# Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

འཇིགས་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



22 September 1999

We will do a few minutes breathing meditation first. Choose a sitting posture, making sure it's comfortable, and relax your body.

As well as a relaxed body, we should also have a relaxed state of mind. When we engage in meditation practice, we should feel physically and mentally at rest. But that is not the only the aim. The main aim of meditation practice is to train the mind and develop a better mental attitude. If we can develop more positive qualities in the mind, we can transform ourselves into better persons.

We need to train the mind because it is completely overpowered by distracting thoughts. We have no control over it – it has no discipline or order. It is like a piece of paper, blown along by the wind of distraction. Through meditation practice, we are trying to settle the mind, rather than let it be carried away by distracting thoughts. Meditation can enhance our inner peace, because inner peace is something we experience when the mind is settled within. We cannot experience inner peace when the mind is distracted outwards.

Breathing meditation is a simple technique. All we need to do is concentrate on the in-breath and out-breath. The benefit of doing this is that we can get rid of all distracting thoughts and rest the mind peacefully inwards. We also try to maintain our concentration, keeping our mind focused on the object, so that we train and discipline the mind, achieving some control over it.

Returning to the commentary on the text, *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*, verse 68 reads:

We have selfish desires and horrible anger  
Which festers inside us, we would never admit;  
Yet without provocation we criticise others  
And self-righteously charge them with faults we possess.

First, we need to think about what true spiritual practice means. It is the practice of offering all gain and victory to others, and accepting all loss and harm for ourselves. If we are not able to do this true spiritual practice, we can at least not cause harm to other beings. If you cannot benefit others, but at least refrain from harming them, this is a basic spiritual practice. This principle of non-harmfulness is common to all schools of spiritual teaching.

For us, spiritual practice means cultivating the thought of benefiting other beings. It also means overcoming the thought of harming others. If we are following the spiritual teachings of Mahayana Buddhism, the main

practice is cultivating the bodhicitta mind (or altruism) – perfecting love and compassion towards other beings. We also have to think about our reasons for following this spiritual practice, and evaluate our thoughts, attitudes, and deeds against these teachings.

If we look honestly at our normal feelings and thoughts, they are all based on this self-centred mind. We can see that this attitude – of making gains for ourselves and not being prepared to accept any loss from others beings – is completely opposite to the spiritual teachings.

The ultimate result of this attitude is great loss for ourselves. Not only do we not give the victory to others and take their loss from them, but also we try to blame our mistakes and our faults on other beings. This clearly shows that we lack true love and compassion for other beings, a good heart for others. Because we lack love and compassion for other beings, we also lack peace and happiness in our own life. With this self-centred mind inside us, we cannot even achieve what we seek in life – peace and happiness that we can extend to other beings.

As long as we hold this self-cherishing mind as the most important thing within us, there is no way that we can perform true spiritual practice. The way to find lasting peace and happiness is overcoming the self-cherishing mind and the attitude of always taking the gain for oneself and giving the loss to others.

If we think about the long-term benefit, we will see that we can find more benefit and gain by following the spiritual principle of placing the needs of other beings above the needs of oneself, and even taking the loss upon oneself.

We need to combat the self-centred mind deep within us, because it is the source of all our daily problems. There is always a problem in our relationships with others, a dispute or a conflict. We are never happy but always unhappy, frustrated, and dissatisfied. The cause is having this self-centred mind, with its selfish goals. All of our problems result from not being able to fulfill the goals of the self-centred mind.

The problem with being driven by selfish goals is that it is not possible for us to experience true peace or happiness. The peace and happiness that we seek depends on respecting the needs of other beings, and cherishing their lives as much as we cherish ours.

If your actions reflect this self-centred mind, you become very isolated, in the sense that you are not accepted by others, because you don't appear to be someone who

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they can trust or rely on. Also, the way you act appears to be in conflict with the views of the other beings. Naturally, you will have problems in establishing good relations with others when you have this strong self-centred mind. Because of this, you become an unhappy person, someone who is also difficult to satisfy.

In day to day life, if you are inwardly unhappy and if there is something that frustrates you deeply, it becomes difficult to achieve any success, even in your worldly activities. Engaging in spiritual practice also becomes difficult. As said before, the main cause of having such problems continuously is this self-centred mind – wanting to achieve something for yourself and not getting it.

We can benefit from studying this spiritual teaching of overcoming the self-cherishing mind and try to integrate it into daily life and put it into practice. As you learn more about it and practise meditation and spirituality, you begin to develop a deeper understanding of other beings, and begin to cherish their needs more and more. If you make progress in this way, naturally you will find more happiness, and even appear to be a happier person to others.

All the teachings about the importance of respecting others and extending love to them are also teaching us about how to live our own lives wisely. We don't necessarily have to see this teaching of showing love, compassion, and tolerance to others, in terms only of its benefit to others. It is also of benefit to your own life. If you see the benefits of tolerating some loss from others, naturally you will be inspired to follow the practice. It is the same in worldly life, when people with a very broad view can take upon themselves much loss and hardship in the immediate time-frame, because they see the long-term benefits.

In day-to-day life we don't usually consider long-term benefits, but view things in terms of an immediate effect. For example, if someone close to us says a few harsh words, we cannot tolerate it. Immediately, we get angry and lash out at that person. If we thought about it broadly and wisely, we would find a great number of problems based on minor things that we could prevent by not getting angry and not holding onto anger in one's mind.

If we think about the nature of the unending problems that exist in relationships, the causes are all minor. However, we don't see it this way. You may become obsessed about a few abusive words that your friend has said to you. On their own, the words don't have the potential to bring great loss and damage to your life, yet they still hurt you. Why? If you check, it is because some negative thought within you has exaggerated the harm of those words into something significant. Shantideva said that if we analyse very clearly and thoroughly, the source of all your life's troubles [the self-cherishing mind] lies deep within yourself, always protected as if it was your most treasured possession.

To a great extent, we can resolve many of our problems by changing our own wrong way of thinking, instead of trying to blame others for our problems – if you do that,

you only make the situation worse. Geshe Doga says that on many occasions, people have complained to him about their friend being short-tempered and not having control over their emotions, and so on. As Geshe Doga says, if you think about yourself – your own temper, your control over your emotions, and your practice of tolerance and patience – you will see that you are as bad as your friend.

Once you see that you have the same problems or worse, it is no longer right for you to complain about others. Further, if you harbour such problems, then it is possible that what you see in others is just a projection or reflection of your own faults. For instance, if you have a short temper and an angry nature, it would always seem to you that any movement or action that caused you to be angry was provoked by others. Sometimes they are provoked, but we can also view this fault in other beings as being a reflection of one's own fault.

We will leave the teaching here and, as usual, do the Buddha's mantra seven times. Once again, sit in the meditation posture, relax your mind and body, and focus your mind on the mantra.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNIYE SOHA*

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*Edit checked against the tapes by Dianne McDonald*

*Edited Version*

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