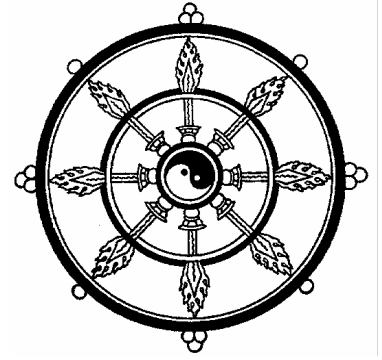


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

འདྲེན་ལྷན་པོའི་མཚན་མོ་ལྷན་པོའི་མཚན་མོ།



6 October 1999

First we will do a few minutes breathing meditation. Choose the most comfortable and relaxing meditation posture for your body. Try to settle the mind inward by preventing it from wandering after external objects. Once have brought the mind fully inward then begin the breathing meditation, directing your whole mental focus on the incoming and outgoing breath.

We should try to see this mediation as a cause for happiness, especially inner happiness. Through meditation we can also learn how much potential each of us has within us, and how we can use this potential to benefit our life.

Verse 69 from the text, *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*, says:

We wear robes of saffron, yet seek our protection
And refuge in spirits and gods of this world.
We have promised to keep solemn vows of strict
morals,
Yet our actions accord with the demons' foul ways.

This shows us the gap between what we promised ourselves we would do and how we would live in this life - and how we are actually living our life. Specifically, there are those who have taken vows to live a very virtuous and moral life in accordance with their religion, as well as to externally show their choice of life by wearing different clothes. In Buddhism, for example, after taking monks' or nuns' vows, saffron robes are worn. But in our actual actions and beliefs, we don't put our trust in the holy objects of refuge from the depths of our heart. Instead, we seek guidance or protection from worldly protectors, sometimes even in the form of spirits or ghosts.

This also refers to Buddhists who have taken individual liberation, Bodhisattva or secret mantra vows but who are not maintaining or even thinking about them. Rather than keeping our vows, we allow our self-cherishing mind to direct and overpower our actions, as identified in the next few lines of the verse.

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 indicates that the cause of creating wrong actions and not being able to live life in accordance with our spiritual vows, is our self-cherishing attitude. By recognising this as source of all wrong actions, we should try to eliminate or diminish this attitude.

If we think about whom we most trust and allow to most

influence our lives, it is as it says in the text - our self-cherishing mind. If we think about it, we see this as our protector and guide. If we investigate, we might find that we do have many spiritual teachers or guides, or spiritual teachings which instruct us to create positive actions and to abandon negative actions. But in practice, we don't refrain from committing negative actions, nor do we make a special effort to undertake positive ones.

If we investigate why we are not encouraged to perform positive actions and instead are motivated to perform negative actions, the cause is our self-cherishing mind. This mind doesn't agree with all the inspiring teachings, instructions or good advice our teachers or good friends have given us. Rather, our self-cherishing motivates or inspires us to do the opposite - negative or unpleasant actions. As it says in the text, if we examine who is our protector and master, we will see that it is our self-cherishing mind. Loving this as our master is why we are committing many negative and unskillful actions.

Due to our self-centred mind we may even reject the advice of our parents or good friends, despite them having the right motivation and love and compassion. No matter what advice we are given, if the advice is not totally agreeable to us, we reject it. If we check, it's because of our self-cherishing. Our ego doesn't want to listen, because it has some other way. There are even situations in which people are destroying their own life, yet they do not recognise that their actions are unskillful and wrong. Again, the self-centred-mind is the reason why they don't recognise this. Even if there are many people to help them, they still won't change.

We should try to see how often, in our experience, we strongly believe that we are right and others are wrong. There are times when we can be so stubborn about our beliefs, even if it's obvious that our views or actions are unpleasant, negative or even violent. By recognising our own self-cherishing, we can better understand it in other people and better help them, even when they don't take our advice. We can be more patient and tolerant with them, rather than getting frustrated or angry when their mind remains fixed. We can understand that some people see advice given to them out of goodwill and friendship as threat, causing them to show anger or even hatred to others. This is all due to the control of their self-cherishing mind.

In talking about this downfall or fault of our self-cherishing mind, we are not saying that our needs are not important. Nor are we saying that we should not

look after our own interest. Rather, we are saying that self-cherishing is self-defeating, destroying our dignity and eventually bringing suffering, pain and problems to our life. Imagine how painful it would be if all those close to you – your parents, close family members or friends - began to hate you and became your enemy. Life is difficult when we do not receive any help from others in our time of need. In this way, even when it's in our own interest, we can bring more happiness by cherishing others, by having respect care and understanding for them.

We have to understand very clearly how self-cherishing affects our relationships or interactions with others. We should try to understand that with this attitude we think of only our own self-interest, and as a result are even prepared to cause harm or loss to other people, even to those very close to us. We do not think of others, or of the consequences of our actions on their lives. The only thing we think of is self-gain, and it doesn't matter what happens to others, even if they have to suffer, take a great loss or become sick.

We are undermining the need of all the other beings with this self-cherishing attitude, by putting our own needs above all others'. We have to ask the question: Is it possible to accomplish our needs with this kind of attitude? Whether or not someone is following a spiritual teaching or living a more worldly life, anyone whose every action is self-centred is not admirable. Those who are admirable are those who have a good understanding of others' needs and always think about them. They understand that it is not only 'me' or 'I' that wants happiness and not suffering or loss, but also that others hold happiness precious. Even from a worldly point of view, a person with these qualities is admirable. In terms of spiritual teachings, a person with these qualities shows a very honest mind, and their views and actions are pure Dharma.

Try to understand how self-cherishing is very destructive, even for one's own interest, and that getting rid of it and opening our heart to others, secures more peace and happiness in our life.

We will end the teaching here and as usual chant the Buddha's mantra seven times.

Again, please sit in the meditation posture, relaxing the mind and body and then trying to focus the mind on the mantra rather than being distracted by external objects.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

Transcribed from the tapes by Rita Feldmann

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