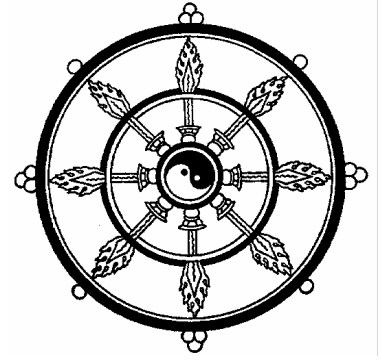


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

འདྲེན་ལྷན་པའི་མཚན་མོ་ལྷན་པའི་མཚན་མོ།



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First of all, as usual, we will do a few minutes breathing meditation together. Choose the most comfortable sitting position and fully relax your body. Keep in the mind that the purpose of the meditation is to train the mind in a positive way – in other words, to develop positive mental habits.

We need to overcome the mind's habit of always being influenced by mental distractions. As a result of these distractions, we generate various thoughts that bring stress, anxiety, or disturbance to the mind. However, if we can achieve some discipline and good patterns of thinking within the mind-stream, the disturbing thoughts will naturally cease. In short, by generating more positive states of mind, we diminish the negative states of mind.

Therefore, to begin this meditation, we should first try to remove all distracting thoughts from the mind and withdraw it fully inward. Next, make sure that the mind is not distracted and wandering after external objects. Try to discipline the mind, directing it on the in-breath and out-breath in such a way that the mind dissolves into the breath. In this meditation, ensure that the in- and out-breath are the only objects in the mind.

There are tremendous benefits if we regularly put aside time to do this meditation practice. Meditation practice is not that hard to understand – what is really important is putting it into practice. Of course, the result for each of us – in terms of gaining mental concentration or not – depends on individual effort.

For the beginner, it is recommended to make the meditation session short. During the meditation session, try as much as possible to mentally hold the object. Whether the object you have chosen is a visualised form or something abstract, it is important to be fully mindful or aware of that object in the mind. For the beginner, it is said that the most effective way to increase concentration and one's ability to keep the mind inward is to check every now and then that the object is still there in the mind. Making such a consistent effort is considered to be very effective.

We will now continue our commentary on the text, *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*, by Dharmarakshita. Verse 72 reads:

We give up monks' vows, the true path to gain freedom;
We would rather be married, have children and homes.
We cast to the wind this rare chance to be happy,
And pursue further suffering, more problems and

woes.

This verse is saying that if we wish to achieve the state of liberation from suffering, or even if we wish to find immediate peace and happiness in this life, the only way for it to occur is to create the right causes and conditions. Therefore, we need to learn the causes of the permanent state of liberation, which is the state we can achieve when we have removed from the mind all delusions or afflictive emotions, together with their root causes. Only then can we reach the state of liberation, a state where there are no longer any causes of suffering, just lasting peace and happiness.

The main cause to achieve the state of liberation is the three-fold training – the training of moral ethics, concentration, and wisdom. Of the three, the most important is the practice of moral ethics. This particular verse emphasises the practice of moral ethics. It is said that moral ethics are the source of all the good qualities we can achieve. Without practising moral ethics, we have no ground to make any spiritual development, like the training of concentration. It is said that success in training ourselves in single-pointed concentration depends on laying a good foundation of the practice of moral ethics.

Without moral practice, the mind is filled with gross distractions and uncontrolled thoughts of external objects. Because of the influence of these gross distractions, as soon as we engage in meditation practice, we find it difficult to concentrate. But if we confront these gross, external distractions, we can progressively draw the mind inwards and overcome more subtle obstacles to our meditation.

Through overcoming not only external, gross mental distractions, but also more subtle obstacles, we will be able to produce the state of single-pointed concentration. As the mind develops more power and more ability to focus, it will become easier for us to penetrate the ultimate nature of reality and gain the wisdom of special insight. When we lay the foundation of good moral practice, the rest of the process takes care of itself. We can achieve liberation very smoothly.

The focus of this verse is morality. We know that, generally, moral ethics means refraining from harmful, negative, non-virtuous actions. Therefore, we can see a direct causal link between moral ethics and the peace and harmony we seek in our lives. The practice of moral ethics includes refraining from the ten non-virtuous actions, such as the first three non-virtuous actions of

body – killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct.

Understanding the individual and social benefits of moral ethics is a matter of common sense. If we take into account refraining from the first three non-virtuous actions of body, we can see that these principles are regarded in society as highly beneficial and can prevent many social problems. Imagine how different the world would be if more people practised restraint in their daily actions, refraining from killing, stealing or sexual misconduct, or from lying, slandering, or harsh speech.

In fact, a person is defined as being peace-loving or violent by their actions of body, speech, and mind. If you want to be seen as peace-loving, your actions of body, speech, and mind have to accord with moral ethics. If you refrain from non-virtuous actions, others will naturally see you not only as being peace-loving and kind, but also as trustworthy. Think about the difference it would make if the people you interacted with daily also practised moral ethics and, on the contrary, how difficult it is to get along with and trust people who are fond of stealing, lying, or adultery. You could not develop sustainable or harmonious relationship with them. So, if no value is put on practising moral ethics in a society, it becomes a very violent and unhealthy place to live.

In this verse, we can see the contradiction between what we seek in life and what we actually do. As Shantideva said, what we seek in life is pleasure, happiness, and peace, but all we do is create the causes of more suffering. Specifically, what we seek is the state of liberation from this worldly existence; but more and more we are attracted to this existence and are always indulging ourselves in its pleasures. The second half of the verse concludes that the main cause of this – not wanting suffering, but creating the causes of suffering – is the self-cherishing, self-centred mind. It says here:

Trample him, trample him dance on the head
Of this treacherous concept of selfish concern.
Tear our the heart of this self-centred butcher
Who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

We will leave tonight's teaching here. If anyone has a question, please feel free to ask it. Geshe-la says that he doesn't give hard questions to others, so don't give one to him!

Question: Is violence ever justified?

Answer: Some people think that violence may sometimes be justified, but in the final analysis, there is no justification for it. Whenever people undertake an action, in their mind they will always have a way of justifying their action as being right. They will always have such a wholesome view of whatever they do.

That is it for tonight. As usual, we will chant the Buddha's mantra. Could people once again adopt the meditation posture, withdraw the mind inward, and focus on the mantra as we chant it.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNIYE SOHA

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