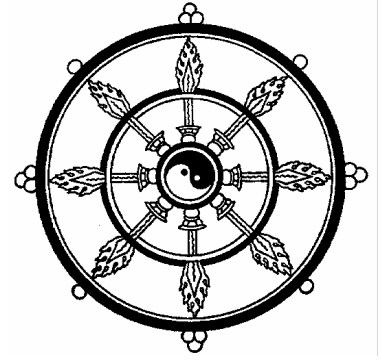


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

འདྲེན་སྤྱོད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



1 December 1999

First, we will do a few minutes breathing meditation together. Make yourselves comfortable in the sitting posture and relax your body.

Before we begin the breathing meditation, try to reflect on the purpose and benefits of doing this meditation practice. Generally, we do meditation practice to decrease our negative states of mind and increase positive states of mind.

From experience, we know that if we enjoy good physical health, good living conditions, and a peaceful, positive state of mind, our life will be happy and peaceful. We must realise the difference that having a positive state of mind and attitude can make. With inner peace, strength, and stability, our long-term happiness will be sustained. Conversely, giving way to negative states of mind or attitudes causes a lack of inner peace and happiness. Instead of having a calm and clear mind, we have a mind that is disturbed, agitated, and lacking in focus.

Therefore, try to cultivate the motivation that we are doing this meditation practice to get rid of negative states of mind, to break down the negative mental habits we have built up. Even if our negative mental habits appear so strong that it seems we may not be able to fully eradicate them, we should think that by doing this meditation we will at least weaken them. We need to reflect on our reason for doing this meditation.

If we observe the mind, we can see how it is under the influence of various distracting thoughts and thoughts of external objects. Because of these thoughts of external objects, our mind does not remain fully within but is scattered, causing a lack of inner peace. Getting rid of distracting thoughts is really a process of bringing all of the mind's energy and capacity back within us.

To begin this breathing meditation, we should first try to get rid of all distracting thoughts from the mind and stabilise the mind fully inward. After this, we should begin the meditation, directing the mind totally to the inhaling and exhaling of the breath.

As to the commentary on the text, *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*, we are now up to verse 77, which reads:

Someone gives us advice from the depths of his heart,
Which is for our own good, but is harsh to our ears,
And with anger we view him as if he is our foe.

This verse concerns our reactions to someone who may say something out of good motivation, care, and concern for us. For instance, it may be our spiritual teacher who shows us the spiritual path; or it may be our parents who

have great love and affection for us. In some circumstances, out of good motivation, they may give us advice or point out some fault that we may possess, and we will naturally regard their words as being abusive or hard on us.

Our negative response simply shows our immature sense of discrimination. We are not able to perceive the words we hear from that person as being beneficial. In fact, the person giving us this advice has no selfish purpose or self-interest - they are giving us advice out of loving kindness. If we did have a mature sense of discrimination, we would acknowledge their advice, even though it may sound very harsh to us. The advice is something that comes from their heart - something that is necessary, beneficial, and useful to us.

However, instead of seeing it like this, when you actually hear unpleasant words from your parents or spiritual teachers, you get angry with them. Because you feel angry with them, you view them as your enemy. How have their words become a cause to generate anger within you?

It is because your initial response is to regard the words as being unpleasant and undesirable. Subsequently, you ponder the words over and over, ascribing an even more undesirable and deeper meaning to them. You project your own meaning onto the words, making them sound even worse. You think to yourself: Why do I deserve such harsh speech? Why do my parents (or teachers) always speak to me like that? Why don't they speak to others like that? Why do only I have to put up with this?

A parent and child need to establish a clear understanding between each other. Much conflict arises because children do not understand the thinking behind their parents' actions and continual advice. If children do not enjoy a harmonious relationship with their parents, this can be a cause of unnecessary problems in later life. The source of our problems is not always related to external things. Your mind and your way of thinking are also important factors in determining whether you will find happiness or suffering in your life.

We have to also remember that we are not perfect, and to acknowledge our own faults. We particularly have to recognise our faulty ways of thinking. Whether a situation is favorable or unfavorable depends on your way of thinking or your view of the situation. As a child, if your view was that your parents' continual advice was a way of trying to control your life, dominate you, and take away your independence and privacy, then

everything your parents say to you will increase your hatred for your parents. This distances you even further from them.

We are not saying that everything said by your parents is perfect and beneficial. We are saying that it is wrong to think that they are giving you advice so that they can control your life or steal your independence. Instead of this wrong view, you should at least try to cultivate the thought that their constant communication with you is a manifestation of their natural flow of love. They are trying to show you how much they love you, and that you mean so much to them. You should also remember that they are your parents, and that they have inborn love for you. Just as they wanted to take care of you when you were young, they are still just trying to show their concern for you.

Even if you are very fond of someone, this bond is not as strong as your parents' bond with you. No matter what conflict may arise with their children, a parent's love is always there – it is unconditional. When there is conflict, it may feel as if there is no love. But if you think about their situation, they too suffer when you are always trying to challenge whatever they do or say, and see it as negative.

You could change this by adopting a positive attitude towards them. You could begin to feel that whatever you hear from them – whether it is relevant or not, or applicable or not – is a sign of their love and concern for you.

The situation of someone trying to rule your life is not necessarily negative. As we said before, the focus of our spiritual practice is on inner mental development. Mental development occurs through the elimination of faults in the mind. To remove such faults, we have to recognise them. Most importantly, we have to understand that if we do not correct these faults, they can become a major source of problems in our relationships and in daily life.

Practising meditation or listening to spiritual teachings is beneficial because you are trying to solve your problems yourself. You are trying to find the cause of your problems and mistakes, and make progress in a natural way. It is more effective and more natural for us to identify and correct faults in ourselves than it is to have someone point them out to us. This will only make us outraged.

In the same verse it continues:

Yet when someone without any true feeling for us
Deceitfully tells us what we like to hear,
Without taste or discernment we are kind in return.
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 verse is self-explanatory. It reminds us that we tend to admire anyone who admires us, anyone who tells us that whatever we do or think is positive and worthwhile. Even if the motivation of your admirer is to deceive you, you still feel well disposed towards them and regard them as being someone who cares about you and who

thinks only of your benefit. This clearly shows how we lack a clear sense of discrimination, a true sense of judgement, because we do not know who is beneficial or harmful to us, and what actions or motivations are right or wrong.

The last few lines say that we lack a clear sense of discrimination about who is truly of benefit to us and who is not, because we hold a self-centred or self-cherishing mind within us. To get rid of such problems and weaknesses, the verse says, we should counteract the self-cherishing mind within us.

We will leave tonight's teaching here. As usual, we will chant the Buddha's mantra seven times. Once again, could you please sit in the meditation posture, making sure that the body is fully relaxed and that the mind is brought fully inward. Then try to remove all distracting thoughts and, when you chant the mantra, instead of being under the influence of distracting thoughts, just focus the mind on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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