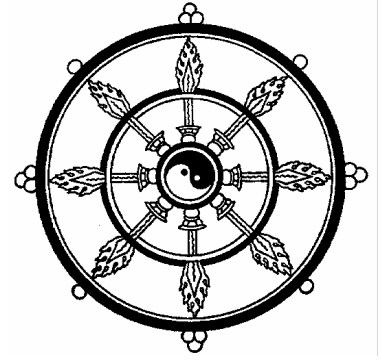


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

འདྲེན་སྤྱོད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



8 December 1999

First, we will do some breathing meditation together. Please choose the most comfortable sitting posture, and fully relax your body. Generate the strong intention that while engaging in the meditation practice, you won't let your mind wander after any external object, but will keep it resting peacefully within you. Then begin the breathing meditation.

You should first try to remove all distracting thoughts from the mind so that its focus is brought inward. Before beginning the actual breathing meditation, try to keep the mind resting inwardly - without being distracted by any object - for a short time. Then you can begin the breathing meditation, directing the focus of the mind to the natural inhalation and exhalation of the breath.

The most important thing in this meditation is stabilising the mind's focus on the object. Another important thing is clarity - holding the object clearly in the mind. Mindfulness is an essential tool for ensuring that one's meditation is going well. If you apply mindfulness, you can rid yourself of the two main obstacles to effective meditation - mental excitement and laxity. When the mind is excited, instead of being single-pointedly fixed on the meditation object, it is influenced by distractions. When you have mental sinking or laxity, even if the mind is fixed on the object, it has a cloudy quality, rather than being clear. So, while applying mindfulness, we will do the breathing meditation for a few minutes.

We will continue the commentary on the text, *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*. The next verse - verse 78 - reads:

When others consider us close and dear friends
And relate in strict confidence all they know,
We disclose their deep secrets especially to their foes.

This verse is talking about the importance of building trust and faith in anyone with whom you have some intimate bond or relationship. It may be a relationship between parent and child, teacher and student, manager and employee, or husband and wife. It is important for us to think about the benefits and advantages of maintaining our faith and trust in such relationships, as well as the disadvantages of having relationships that lack faith and trust.

As said here, the people you consider as being close to you are normally the ones you regard as trustworthy. Therefore, you disclose your secrets to and share your feelings with these people. Generally, most people find it difficult to keep their thoughts to themselves and feel the need to share their ideas, feelings, and views with

someone else. Normally, the person they choose to disclose these thoughts to is a close friend.

If this close friend is not trustworthy, he or she has the potential to harm your reputation. For example, if you were a leader or politician, a 'trustworthy' servant or attendant could disclose your secrets to your worst enemies. The famous Tibetan master, Geshe Potowa, said that your best friend is the one who shares the same mind as you. This means a person who is fully reliable, faithful, and trustworthy.

If there is trust and faith in a relationship, that relationship will be stable and consistent. If our relationships lack such trust, they will always be up and down. Even if you live with someone in a close relationship, if you do not trust each other wholeheartedly, then it is easy to be suspicious of each other about the smallest matters. Because of the suspicious thoughts that arise due to a lack of faith or trust in your friend, your mind will project its own prejudices. It will begin to project and superimpose its own meaning onto the person's words or actions, for example, making that person appear to be someone who could not be called your close friend.

If we do not bring genuine faith and trust to our relationships, then we will try to sustain them superficially. For example, two close friends may act only in accordance with each other's behaviour, with one or both partners observing the other's words and actions and responding in a similar manner. Such a relationship would be hard to keep stable and close.

It is implied here that you should not reveal any secrets you hear from a friend to others, especially to his or her enemies. Usually, however, most people cannot keep their word, and are careless about who they disclose a friend's confidences to. While it may be all right to disclose the confidential information to a close friend, it is not good to disclose it to someone who will take advantage of it and bring your friend down.

We are discussing here the importance of keeping a promise or vow to another. Geshe Doga points out that in most countries, when two people go through a wedding ceremony at a church or temple, they recite vows in the name of God or some other holy being, in the presence of a highly qualified spiritual practitioner such as a priest.

Geshe-la says that he hasn't actually seen the vows, but assumes that they include statements such as the man not taking any other woman while he married, and the

woman not taking another man. From a religious point of view, when you take this vow, you are taking it as part of a ceremony in the presence of God and a priest in a very holy place in front of everyone who is close to you – parents, friends, and so on. Geshe Doga says that the purpose of this is to give you more strength in your mind to always be faithful. The function of the ceremony is to leave a strong imprint in your mind, so that whatever promises or vows you take in the ceremony will inspire you to be faithful to and trusting of each other.

Anyway, that is how Geshe Doga says he interprets the meaning of a wedding ceremony. But for many people, the ceremony has no religious significance and is just a social custom they observe. It is up to the individual how to interpret it. As said before, it can be a very effective influence.

The same verse continues:

When we have a good friend who is constantly with
us,
We locate his weak points so we can torment him.
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 saying that, from the depth of one's heart, we should resolve never to deceive our close friends. We should always behave and speak to these people in a decent manner. If, instead of treating your close friends decently, you act and speak harshly to them, the cause of not being able to relate to them appropriately is none other than your self-centred mind.

It is this self-centred mind that we should identify as the cause of not being able to engender trust and affection in a friend. In fact, this mind really 'steals the heart' of this friend. As discussed earlier, when you promise to keep a friend's secret yet disclose it to others, it is like stealing that friend's heart. Therefore, it says here to "Tear out the heart of this self-centred butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release".

That is all for tonight's talk. As usual, we will chant the Buddha's mantra seven times. Could people please once again sit in the meditation posture and focus the mind on the mantra:

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

*Transcribed from the tapes by Rita Feldmann
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