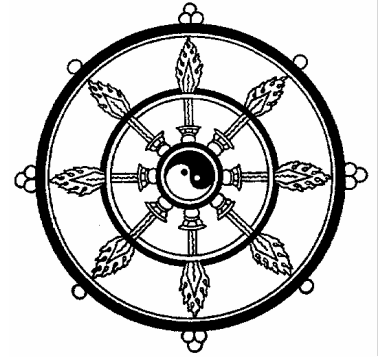


# Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

འཇིགས་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



15 December 1999

As usual, first we will do some breathing meditation. Please find a comfortable sitting posture, making sure your body is fully relaxed. Next, try and generate the motivation of doing this meditation in order to bring your mind fully under control. You should feel very determined about calming your mind. As you begin the meditation, you should direct your attention to the inhaling and exhaling of the breath, and get rid of all distracting thoughts.

When following a meditation practice, you must be clear about what you are trying to achieve. Meditation is regarded as a method of developing the mind's beneficial qualities. It is a way of disciplining or training the mind. It is also a way of familiarising the mind with knowledge and wisdom, a way of educating the mind. Through meditation practice, the source of problems within the mind can be counteracted; however, we need to know precisely which antidote to apply to oppose these problematic forces.

When we engage in meditation practice, we are trying to explore our 'inner world' so that we can identify its beneficial aspects, which we can cultivate, and its harmful or destructive aspects that need to be overcome. In our meditation practice, we need to be analytical about our actions and ourselves, examining what is inside us by focusing our attention inward.

Whenever we make decisions about external things - for example, choosing a friend - we usually give much thought to the advantages and disadvantages of the potential friendship before making up our mind. We should apply a similar analytical process to examining the mind. From this, we can gain much knowledge about how to secure our lives externally and internally, in terms of optimum comfort, and so on.

We know from our own experience that both internal and external factors are important to our comfort. But, even if our external living conditions are comfortable, it can be difficult to find satisfaction if we are experiencing internal problems. If you think about it, it is even more important to create favourable inner conditions and get rid of unfavourable ones.

Normally, whenever we confront a disaster - losing a friend, or our wealth, or whatever - our mind feels pain and can make us feel depressed or even hopeless. In this state, we may feel that life is not worth living, and that there is nothing to bring us happiness or a good reason for living. We may feel helpless. Such a situation clearly

shows that we have relied only on the presence of an external friend to provide us with happiness and a meaning to life. This is a very materialistic attitude.

However, if we can find something worthwhile within us and create favourable internal conditions for happiness, it is just like finding a friend. In times of need, any help that you receive from friends is beneficial. So, if we sustain that internal 'friend' - which is any state of mind that brings us some happiness - there is something to provide us with happiness and peace even when external conditions fail. We need to understand that we have a great positive force within us, which can give us hope and provide us with a broader perspective of our day-to-day situations and problems.

The internal qualities that we should cultivate to secure more happiness and less suffering in our lives are the benevolent attitudes of loving kindness and compassion. These are the highest spiritual qualities, which have been praised by all the buddhas and bodhisattvas. Through meditation practice, we can begin to see the value of developing these positive states of mind, and understand the adverse impact that negative states of mind can have on our lives.

There is much to learn about the practice of cultivating love and compassion as a spiritual practice. In a broader sense, spiritual practice is not just about developing love and compassion. It is also the practice of working on our own mind, of mental and spiritual development. We have to understand we can only make progress in our practice based on what already exists within us. For instance, the development of love and compassion is not just referring to the love and compassion we feel for those beings who are already close to us. If we look more closely, we can see that the intensity of our love and compassion differs from person to person.

The concept of developing love and compassion really means perfecting the love and compassion that you show to other beings, whether they are related to you or not. However, in order to know what true love and compassion are, we need a basis for evaluation.

True love and compassion are feelings based on the needs of others. True love is the feeling that arises when you see another being deprived of joy and happiness, and you experience sympathy for that person. Out of sympathy, you show care, the thought of giving happiness to that person. True love is expressed without any connection to the selfish mind. It has no expectation

---

of rewards - it is purely based on wanting to satisfy others' needs. Compassion is a feeling of sympathy for other beings that are undergoing suffering or problems, and also has no connection with the selfish mind. Rather the aim is to help those people out of their problematic situations.

All of us have room within us to love others. If we examine the difference between the love and compassion we show to those who are close to us and those who are not, we can see that the love we show to those who are not related is, in a sense, more pure. If the desire to give to unrelated people arises, we are obviously not thinking of any reward, but simply thinking of the other person and of just giving.

We show love to those related to us - such as husbands or wives, and sons and daughters - because we consider them as our friends. We care for them not only because of their needs, but also because of our intimacy with them. So, our love is accompanied by some desire or attachment - loving them not just because of some need from their side, but also a need from our own side. This attachment is what causes problems in our relationships with those close to us. We do not have enough of this true quality of love and compassion towards others. Because of attachment and selfishness, as soon as the other person in a relationship hurts our feelings or ego, we stop loving them and even change our attitude towards them.

Attachment and our strong selfish mind prevent us from forming steady relationships with others. As said before, if the other person hurts your feelings, your attitude towards that person can change dramatically, and what you called love suddenly turns to hatred. In the past, whenever that friend achieved anything, you would have felt good about it. Likewise, if they had experienced loss, you would have felt bad.

But, when your love is replaced by hatred, your whole view changes. When you see your friend happy and enjoying him or her self, you may feel negative and wish that the friend had more problems and suffering. There is not love. If our feeling for someone was pure love, then our attitude towards him or her would remain the same, regardless of how they treated us and how they viewed their relationship with us. Even if they were to end the relationship, the feeling of true love would remain. By sustaining a feeling of true love in one's mind all the time, one does not get affected by any changes that happen in life. Thus, the benefits of love are infinite.

We consider anyone who shows much love and compassion to others as a good human being. They are not the product of cultivating the opposite to love and compassion - anger and hatred. When we make an effort to develop love and compassion, feelings of anger and hatred towards others will decrease. We should feel confident about our ability to develop more love and compassion, and to diminish anger and hatred.

We have the capacity to experience both love and hatred. However, we must recognise them as opposing forces. The question you must ask yourself now is: which do

you want to utilise more in your life, love or hatred?

Since these are opposing forces, if you develop more love, then automatically your hatred will diminish, because you can't have both together at the same time. For example, if your mind is boiling with anger and hatred, and suddenly a close friend whom you love very much turns up, suddenly you forget about your hatred. Thus, we can understand that hatred and other feelings only arise due to certain conditions - they do not permanently reside in the mind. Hatred is not in the fundamental (non-polluted) nature of the mind. Therefore, if we make some effort to generate love within us, we can get rid of hatred.

As we said before, love is a feeling of genuinely wishing others to be happy. Compassion is wishing someone to be free of problems and suffering. We must remember that all beings want happiness for themselves and do not want any problems. Generating love and compassion is to extend this feeling beyond the border of our selfish mind. When we do that, we can share the same feelings with our enemies. So, if your enemy has some success, you will feel positive and good about it. Just as you wish for happiness and no suffering for yourself, you wish the same for your enemies.

As Shantideva, the renowned Indian master, said, there are outer and inner friends, but there is a difference in the way we should relate to them. Towards the outer enemies, it is more beneficial if you relate to them with friendly gestures of love and compassion, so that you can win their hearts and their friendship. By showing love and compassion to an outer enemy, you are gaining some victory for yourself. Even if you try to be friendly and support them, with material aid and so forth, because they have similar human feelings, they will respond in the same manner. You will have made them your friend.

However, to our inner enemies - such as the negative states of mind of anger, pride, and jealousy - instead of being soft and agreeing with them, we should forcefully destroy them. By recognising that these negative states of mind are the true sources of the problems and suffering that you and other beings face, you can try to counteract them.

That is all for the teaching tonight. We will recite the 21 Tara prayers once and, as usual, we will chant the Buddha's mantra seven times.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

*Transcribed from the tapes by Rita Feldmann  
Edited by Rita Feldman & Mary-Lou Considine  
Edit checked against the tapes by Dianne McDonald  
Edited Version  
© Tara Institute*