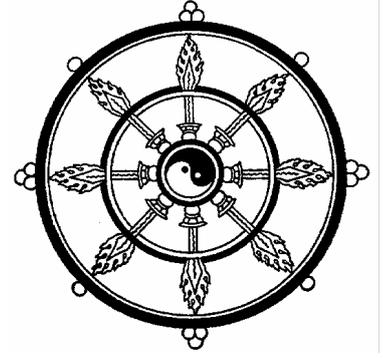


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

ཨོ ལྷོ་སྤྱད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



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As usual, first we will do some breathing meditation. Sit in the meditation posture, and make sure your body is fully relaxed. Physical rest or comfort is not sufficient to bring the rest or the happiness we seek. On top of physical relaxation, we should also realise how important it is to achieve mental rest and happiness.

When we engage in meditation it is not just physically relaxing, it is also mentally relaxing. However, the relaxation we find in true meditation is not the same as the kind of rest we can achieve if we just try to sit back and simply stop all the distracting thoughts and mentally rest in a neutral state. Rather, in our meditation practice it is important that we try to discipline our mind by preventing distracting thoughts and then bringing the mind inward and letting it rest there.

It is important to have some knowledge of the shortcomings of not controlling our mind in meditation. Our mind can become so wild with various distracting and disturbing thoughts to such an extent that inwardly we fear our brain might be unstable! Bear this in mind as we begin this meditation. Problems arise if we do not try to curtail our thought processes. We are trying to remove, all disturbing thoughts of external objects. As we do this, we can find our mind stabilising, allowing us to direct our attention fully onto the meditation object, which here is just the in-breath and out-breath. If we single-pointedly fix our mind on our breath, we are able to develop some degree of concentration and control of our mind.

In continuing the teaching from the *Wheel of Sharp Weapons* we are up to Verse 79. The first few lines read:

Our jealousy is strong and whatever is said
We are always the sceptic, we doubt what is meant.
We are fussy, bad-tempered and hard to get on with,
Inflicting obnoxious behaviour on others.

This verse refers to people who are very short-tempered in that it takes only a very minor cause for them to lose their temper or become angry. For instance, such people can become outrageously angry if someone even looks at them in a negative way, or if they hear just a few unpleasant words. We are also talking about people whose thoughts are never settled, no matter what they are trying to do. Even if what they are trying to achieve is very wholesome, they are still very indecisive and sceptical. There's always a dilemma and they always suspect and doubt whatever actions or ideas they might have and are always preoccupied with endless worldly thoughts and negative states of mind.

The verse is saying that as a result of all these shortcomings, such people are under great pressure and tension. They can't make any move because they are too worried and wound up inside. They are also prone to negative actions, even something very harmful or unpleasant. Of course, their life would be affected by their actions. For instance, they would have difficulty getting along with other people.

We have to think about what we can do to avoid being like such people. I am not necessarily saying that any of us is like that, but still, even if you're not such a person, it's possible to become one. It is important to try to relate these teaching to our own lives. We should try to see what we can learn from them, and ask ourselves what kind of practice is implied from these teaching, in order to benefit ourselves.

Try to imagine what it would feel like to be continually short-tempered, easily annoyed or disturbed by even the slightest unfavourable conditions. Think about how anger arises, how if we allow it to overtake and generate in our mind we feel very unhappy. Also think about the kind of anger we have generated and the effect it has on our actions. One effect is that when we are angry, disturbed or annoyed inwardly, even our outer appearance, our face, becomes dark. Anger can also cause us to be unpleasant and show aggression in our communications with other people, either through our actions, mannerisms, or the way we conduct ourselves outwardly.

We should also consider that when we fall under the control of anger, our appearance and actions become very abnormal. We also need to consider who is affected by our actions - are they strangers or those close to us? Normally those affected by our unpleasant actions are those who are close to us and who have been very supportive of us - partners, relatives and close friends. Anger not only causes unhappiness in your mind, but also in all those close to you. It is clear that anger deprives ourselves and others of inner peace, happiness and stability.

If you are the kind of person that gets angry very quickly, or annoyed by the slightest causes or conditions, remember that it's not possible to get rid of such conditions. No matter who you live with, or who your friends are, in a single day you will confront unfavourable conditions in your interactions. If you cannot overcome this problem of being easily annoyed, there is no chance of finding inner peace and happiness.

The arising of anger shows our own weakness and control of our own emotions. For example, a person who cannot tolerate even the noise of falling water can become very annoyed and restless. Even if they are lying in a comfortable bed, they can't go to sleep because of the outside noise. It's always important to do something to stop having such problems. On one hand, think as much as possible about all the downfalls of the anger, and on the other hand, try to think of the advantages or benefits we could gain if we could overcome this problem. For example, we could improve our relationship with others, in contrast to being an angry person who is difficult to live with. When we talk of improving relationships, of finding a better friend, we should not always consider external factors like appearance. Being beautiful doesn't mean you'll find a good long-lasting friend. Likewise, if you accumulate abundant wealth, it also doesn't mean you'll find good lasting relationships. Using our own eyes and ears, we can see what destroys and what makes good relationships. We can see that being beautiful or wealthy doesn't result in stable or good relationships with others. In fact, in many cases it can result in the opposite. So, having a good personality in terms of having a good mental attitude and physical manner is essential in sustaining harmonious and beneficial relationships with others.

In opposition to anger, if we could practice or develop patience or tolerance, this can serve as a source of lasting inner peace and more stability. It can also lead to being able to cultivate a sense of love, care and compassion towards others, and to not being easily annoyed or upset by unfavourable conditions. Instead of harming or being the cause of upsetting others, you contribute to joy in others. Then it's natural that others appreciate and like you. Even enemies would begin to like you if you benefited them.

If someone does small unpleasant actions towards you, think about why they are doing it, and whether they deliberately wanted to harm you. In many cases, rather than immediately reacting, if you truly understand their situation, you will find that they did not necessarily mean to harm or annoy you. This way of thinking can help to overcome this continuous problem of anger.

The remedy to overcoming disturbing and distracting thoughts is engaging in meditation practice.

The last two lines of the verse says :

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.

The text is pointing out that the original source of afflictive emotions is the self-cherishing mind. From our own experience, we need to try to understand and recognise this self-cherishing attitude. With this attitude, we think only of benefiting ourselves, and are motivated to harm others, even those who are very close like partners and parents, or someone from whom you have received a great deal of support and kindness. There are many examples of people physically and mentally harming their parents because of their own self-cherishing

attitude. This attitude is why we easily get angry, lack inner stability and control of our feeling and emotions. In other words, it is the cause of these problems. These problems do not happen unconditionally or without any cause. They are linked to the cause of our self-cherishing mind.

The main remedy to overcoming self-cherishing is cultivating Bodhicitta, the altruistic mind of enlightenment. Furthermore, self-cherishing arises from self-grasping – the view that this person, this 'I', exists inherently. The ultimate remedy, the weapon to destroying self-grasping, is the wisdom of perceiving the ultimate truth of emptiness. In short, we need to understand and recognise that the problem of the negative emotions we have been talking about, we can identify within ourselves. And just as the cause of the problem is within ourselves, so is the remedy to the problem.

We will leave the teaching here and finish with the chanting of Buddha's mantra. Once again, sit in the meditation posture and just relax, remove all external thoughts and focus your mind on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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