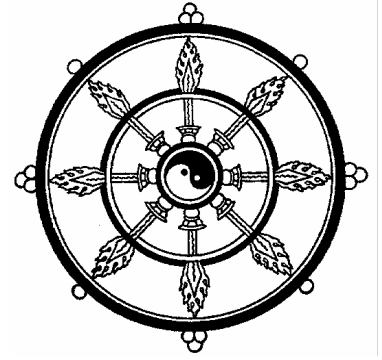


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

འདྲེན་ལྷན་པའི་མཚན་མོ་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



1 March 2000

As usual, we will begin with breathing meditation. Make yourself comfortable and relax in the sitting posture. The goal of meditation is primarily to calm your mind to achieve some feeling of peace and happiness in yourself. You can also think of meditation as a form of training your mind, which needs training because it is not calm or disciplined. With this motivation, begin by removing all distracting thoughts until your mind is fully stabilised or settled. Focus your mind single-pointedly on the in-breath and out-breath. Focus on the object - your breath - as if your mind and your breath are not separate entities. When you meditate, whatever object you choose to focus on, your focus should not be 'out there' while your mind is 'here' with you watching or looking at the object. It means your mind actually becomes one with, or dissolves into, the object. Spend a few minutes on this breathing meditation.

Meditation helps us to have more control over our mind by making it more stable. If we can stabilise our mind, we can make it firm and lasting. Even in a one to two minute meditation, if the meditation is done properly, we can notice that our mind is calmed, almost overpowered. Because of this, our mind is not under the influence of any negative emotions such as desire or hatred. This is a benefit or effect of meditation we can understand from own experience. If we can make very good progress in our meditation practice, we have a greater capacity to control our mind. For instance, if we are very bothered by bitterness or anger, by being well-trained in meditation practice we can get rid of that anger or bitterness by simply engaging in meditation. You'll find it is not difficult to get rid of the anger, or to remove any concern or object that generates anger.

Even in terms of achieving or accomplishing success in our life, whether it is something mundane or spiritual, our success depends on how much effort we exert. The effort we exert in our actions also depends upon our state of our mind. If our mind is fully focussed on whatever we are doing, this enables us to put all our efforts into our actions. Whereas if our mind is distracted, it will not be a full effort we put into our actions. Whether we're following a spiritual practice or whether we're just trying to achieve success in worldly pursuits, meditation can be beneficial.

We continue our discussion on the text *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*, Verse 80, which reads :

When someone requests us to do something for him,
We are never obliging, but think up instead

Clever devious methods to do him some harm.
When others concede and agree with our viewpoint,
We do not acquiesce - we argue still more.

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 explains why there are people who respond to good and kind advice they receive from others by being upset, or quarrelling or arguing with them. Even when others show respect towards them, in return they show pride, are critical, or attempt to bring them down. In our lives can see many such examples - like people not paying attention to the good spiritual advice given to them by their teachers or spiritual friends. Instead, what they do is opposite to the advice given. Instead of thanking the person who gave the advice, or appreciating the advice given, they may feel or generate animosity towards them. There are many examples of parents having difficulty guiding their children, no matter what good, beneficial advice they give to their children out of affection or care. Of course, many children do not accept their advice, and in fact may regard their parents as enemies. They may feel that the advice has been given to destroy their lives.

There are also many examples of advice not being accepted in friendships, or met with a negative response. These are all things we can also see in our lives, and we may even be someone who does not fully appreciate the respect others show us. Instead of appreciating and thanking them, we may even explode and belittle or abuse them. As the verse says, the underlying cause of such thinking is the self-cherishing mind, which we hold at the bottom of our heart as if it is our treasure. Because of this self-cherishing, it is so easy for us to view others as enemies. It only takes a very minor undesirable or unfavourable action to make us make view others as our enemies, or to get very annoyed with them. Recognising this self-cherishing mind as the source of all such problems, we should try to think about reducing or eliminating it.

Another reason we do not accept good advice given to us by a spiritual teacher, parents, relatives or friends, is because we have our own view on the advice given. Again, this is due to the self-cherishing mind. Of course, from our point of view, the advice given to us is not good, beneficial advice. However, if we examine the long-term benefits of the advice against the benefits of

following our own views, we may see that the advice given to us is the right advice. An example of this is parents encouraging their children to complete their studies, and other such things. If you neglect or reject this kind of advice and do something else at that time, it's like implanting a seed for future mental suffering. In the long-term it may be a future source of guilt, regret and depression. In this way, we can see that the good advice we receive from others as beneficial, and going against it as a source of future misery and suffering.

Continuing the parent-children example, there are many examples of parents getting very disappointed or frustrated when their children do not complete their education. When children do not listen to such advice, it can cause harm to their relationship with their parents. When they are grown up, they may look back and feel bad about not having completed their studies in the early stage of their life. Also, if the conflict continues into the future, this can affect both the entire life of the parents and the children. Outwardly, some people say they have completely cut off their relationship with their parents. They seem to appear very self-supportive and very happy. But, in fact, if we look deep down, there is some sadness due to them not being able to have a good continuous relationship with their parents.

It is so important, right from the beginning of a child's life, for the relationship formed between parents and children to be healthy. It is also better that while your parents are alive to try to understand what they have done for your life, and try as much as possible to repay their kindness. If instead you do the opposite - do all you can to cause more suffering or misery in your parents' lives - and your parents pass away before you do, at some stage you will realise how kind they were to you, and all you will be left with is guilt and regret. If in the latter part of your life you think of your parents and feel bad, you can trace the causes back to the stage of your life where you had all the conflict with them.

It is important to return here to what everyone wants, which is to always be happy, positive and kind-hearted. It is important to overcome or prevent any actions which can bring unhappiness to us now, or in the future. If we enjoy peace and happiness in our mind, then no matter where we live, who we live with, or our living conditions, we will find ourselves very satisfied with our lives. Geshe-la says that these days when he tells other people about his early life story they get shocked to know what hardship he went through in the past. However, he recalled that he didn't go through any hardship himself. This confirms to him that how you feel about your life - whether you feel satisfied and happy or not - is more to do with your mental attitude than with material, living conditions. Therefore, in his teaching to others, he is always trying to emphasise the importance of knowing how to bring happiness to our minds. This is not about changing our external conditions, but instead depends on creating change within ourselves.

That's all for tonight's teaching. As usual, we will finish with the chanting of Buddha's mantra. Again, sit in the meditation posture, making sure you are fully relaxed

and comfortable. Make sure your mind is resting without any distracting external thoughts. As we chant the mantra, focus just on it.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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