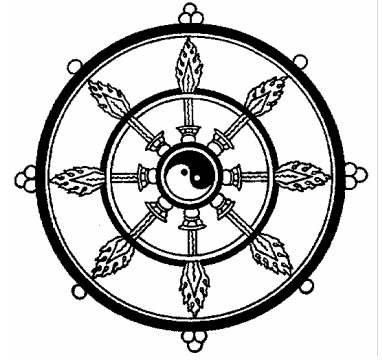


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

འཇིགས་མེད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



22 March 2000

First, we will do some breathing meditation together. Choose a comfortable sitting posture, and make sure that you are fully relaxed.

Next, check your mind. If it is influenced by distracting thoughts, try to get rid of them. As you sit in this relaxed posture, try to also rest your mind by bringing it fully inward so that it is undisturbed by outside objects.

Having done this, you will find some inner peace, which you experience as being like an emptiness or nothingness, devoid of objects. Then you should begin the breathing meditation.

In this breathing meditation, we have to focus the mind single-pointedly on the incoming and outgoing breath. Try to make every effort to prevent distracting thoughts from interfering with your single-pointed concentration on the breath.

We'll continue our teaching on the text *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*. We are up to Verse 83.

We do not think of friendships as long-term commitments,
We treat old companions with thoughtless neglect.
And when we are making new friends with a stranger,
We try to impress him with grandiose ways.
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 brings up the point about how we can mistreat our friends and quickly change our attitude towards them. For instance, in the past, you may have known someone you considered to be an intimate friend, someone who was close to your heart, someone whom you longed for.

But when that same person faced hard times - perhaps falling from a higher position to a lower one, or experiencing some kind of mental or personal problem - you did not think of helping and supporting that friend and let yourself forget that this person was very close to you. Instead, you may even have turned your back on that friend, not wanting to know about their problems.

When our friends or others close to us face difficulties, we should always be there to support them. Rather than trying to distance ourselves from them, we should try to be even closer. At such times, they need our help and support. If we do not support a friend at such a time, then it becomes obvious that we are not a true friend and

lack a good human nature.

The implication here is that if you support your friend at such a time, this is a substantial cause for making the relationship deeper and more intimate. When your friend has resolved his or her problem, he or she will trust you even more and feel closer to you. Helping a friend at a time of need is a cause to strengthen the relationship, by bringing more trust and faith.

When you think about it, most of us want a special friend with whom we can share our life. However, to achieve this, we have to do more than just wish for a lasting and trustworthy friendship. We also have to think about how to sustain good relationships with others.

What is the best way for us to develop and maintain friendships, from our side? A friendship does not just serve the interests of one person - it must also satisfy the interests of the other. We don't have much control over the behaviour of other people. No matter how fond you are of them, if they lose interest in you and change their mind, there is nothing you can do. Even letting them know how much you love them may make no difference.

Instead of thinking about how to control the other person, one should be thinking about how to control oneself - especially one's own mind. When we can control our own mind, our life will be more stable, despite changes in our relationships with others. Because our inner attitude is consistent, we will not be so vulnerable to outer changes.

If we think about the positive changes we can make to our lives, changing the mind is the most important, because the mind is the source of all our actions. As we have said, you must always try to help and support friends or other people you are fond of, especially when they face some problem or disaster. This is something they will greatly appreciate. Even in the eyes of others, your actions will be admirable, because they will see how you sacrifice your own needs to support a friend who is facing problems. When they observe this, they will wish that they themselves had such a good friend.

Your actions towards your friends should be as positive and beneficial as possible. Your speech should be pleasant, and when you are giving them material aid, try to do it to the best of your knowledge and capability. Then, even if some problem occurs in a friendship, there is no need to feel regret and you can feel that you have done the best you can, that there is nothing more you can do.

The next lines of the verse are:

And when we are making new friends with a stranger,
We try to impress him with grandiose ways.

We readily distance ourselves from an old friend who, in the past, we cherished as being our closest friend. When they face some hardship in their life, we abandon them. On the other hand, we try very hard to make and impress new friends, even if they are somebody we have just met, and know little about.

We are easily attracted to other people. In order to win a new friend or partner, we might lie to them by saying promising, sweet-sounding words to impress them. For example, even if you are poor, you may lie to them and imply that you are wealthy. You feel no shame about lying to them and deceiving them.

We cannot afford to be so hasty in making friends with others, and to be even hastier in ending our friendships. It is impossible to find a good friend who we can fully trust. Further, we create more problems and suffering for ourselves by having such a casual attitude towards our friends.

The last half of the verse once again says that our own self-cherishing mind is the cause of holding this wrong attitude towards our friends. The self-centred mind is the basis of all our wrong ways of thinking. We think only about our own needs and completely lack any care and concern for others.

The one thing we need to learn from this text - which is based on the thought transformation teachings of Mahayana Buddhism - is that we should blame all of our problems on the self-cherishing mind. The verses reinforce this message over and over. They also convey another message - that our problems are not caused by other people.

We need to understand every situation we find ourselves in not only in terms of our own needs, but the needs of others. If our view is based on the self-cherishing mind, we inevitably create negative actions. We are capable of doing anything and feel no shame about doing such things. When we are controlled by the self-cherishing mind, we can easily turn away from old friends or lie to others. Any type of gross negative action is possible.

When we try to diminish the self-cherishing mind and instead try to cherish and benefit other beings, we will begin to understand them and be more tolerant of their views and actions. If they act negatively, we won't blame them. Rather than trying to link the cause of their negative actions to them as a person, we will try to link the cause to the deep-seated self-cherishing mind within them.

Try to recognise the self-cherishing mind as the cause of the harm you receive from others. Then you will discover a different way of thinking about other beings. Remember that you yourself can be a victim of a breakdown in a relationship. Someone you may have known for a long time may leave you for a new friend. Applying this teaching on thought transformation can inspire you and help you, because it is not easy to accept

being discarded by a friend you've known for a long time.

It can make a big difference if you have some Dharma knowledge - particularly about thought transformation - and try to utilise it in such circumstances. Many people have taken the teachings on thought transformation as a source of practical advice, and have found them to be very beneficial. They are able to use the teachings to help them make decisions without getting too caught up in their problems, which they could not have done otherwise. These thought transformation teachings are definitely a beneficial practice to integrate into your daily life.

That's all for the teaching tonight. As usual, we will chant the Lord Buddha's mantra. Again, sit in a meditation posture and, after calming all distracting thoughts, focus the mind on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

Transcribed from the tapes by Gabrielle Thompson

Edited by Mary-Lou Considine

Edited checked by Sandup Tsering

Edited Version

© Tara Institute