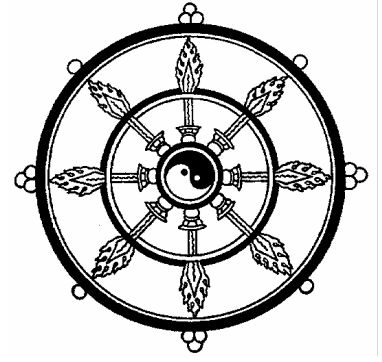


# Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

ཨོ ལྷོ་སྤྱད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



3 May 2000

As usual, first we will do some breathing meditation. The very first thing is to sit in a comfortable posture and fully relax your body. Next, try to bring the mind at rest or at peace, not only just in this moment, but also in daily life. We have to realise that the peace and happiness we seek is in our hands. So if we strongly wish for that, then we have to make it happen. It's not something we are just going to suddenly find, by waiting. It's also not the case that if you have any problem or worries, that if you wait they will simply disappear. If it is so undesirable, then you have to do something to get rid of it. In this way, in our daily life we always have to remember that if we want peace and happiness - if we really want our mind to be happy, to be free of any stress and peaceful - we can do something to make that happen within us. It is all entirely up to us. Just as when we sit in meditation we find ourselves physically at rest, we also have to rest mentally. We'll find this if we make an effort to enhance mental peace.

It is very obvious that when our mind stops producing various thoughts and strongly running or racing after things we can find peace within, and therefore we are also at rest. We can understand the effectiveness or the benefit of meditation, because when we engage in meditation, all we are doing is making an effort to try to diminish or minimise all the wandering thoughts. We are also trying to overcome or eliminate wrong attitudes or ways of thinking. We are also trying to focus on or produce more positive attitudes and states of mind. In this way, meditating has obvious benefits because it helps to calm our mind and helps to increase more positive states of mind and ways of thinking. We know from our own experience that if our mind is not at rest, and always preoccupied with various wandering and bothersome thoughts, then even if outwardly or physically we are in a very peaceful environment, even if we are doing nothing, if our mind is wandering and not resting, there is no rest for us. We cannot feel peace. In this way we can appreciate and undertake more meditation practice within our life.

Checking your mind, if you notice that it is overpowered or under the influence of negative or distracting thoughts, then you should immediately try to remove that thought. Make sure your mind is fully resting within, and then engage in this breathing meditation by focusing just on the out-breath and the in-breath. Don't allow any thought or object to distract your mind from these objects.

Okay, thank you, now you can wake up from your deep meditation! In fact, the term 'Buddha' means 'awakened'. Sometimes it's explained as awakening from the sleep of ignorance. The blossoming of the lotus flower, is in a sense symbolic of developing all perfect qualities. So when you arise from meditation, it is supposed to be like that, like an awakened being. Furthermore, the meaning of the term

'Buddha' or 'The Awakened One' is the like the rising of the sun. When the sun rises, then all darkness is dispelled. When you are awakened, it's like dispelling all the ignorance or the darkness from the mind. Then the sunrise can also be cause to open the lotus flowers. When you awaken, your mind opens to the full limit or extent of knowledge.

Tonight we are discussing the thought transformation text *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*. We are up to Verse 87, which reads:

We do not follow proper procedures of study;  
We say it is needless to read the vast texts.  
We feel there is no value in learning from gurus;  
We slight oral teachings and think we know best.

It is saying here that we do not follow proper procedures of studies. From a very early age, we never took the study of dharma, of the spiritual teachings, very seriously. Then later on in our life, we might have shown some interest and learned a very small amount of dharma. We might have become very content or satisfied with the little knowledge that we gained. But the reason we are satisfied with the small amount of knowledge is mainly because that we cannot imagine it is possible to learn all the things that can be learned. Mentally or intellectually we cannot take more than this little amount we have gained. For these reasons, some people with this little knowledge then misunderstand that it is not necessary to acquire the vast and profound knowledge of dharma. Even worse, they may despise or criticise the teachings, thinking what is the point of learning all the vast and profound teachings of dharma? The reason for being critical and holding such narrow views on learning dharma is due to one having gained only little knowledge, and not being able to take any more knowledge than one already has.

One might also complain that it is not necessary in spiritual training to rely upon a spiritual master or a spiritual guru. One might also think it is not necessary to receive these spiritual teachings as an oral transmission, or as an explanation from the masters. One believes that whatever knowledge one has gained is sufficient, and therefore there is no need to depend on or to seek a spiritual master, or to receive such teaching from others.

To explain why one holds such views with respect to learning the teachings, next the root text 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.

So we can trace the cause to this self-cherishing mind.

Often, when people hear the teachings about this topic,

---

about how negative it is to have this self-cherishing or self-centred mind, some people may get the wrong notion. They may wrongly understand that this teaching is actually about putting yourself and your own needs down. It should be very clear in your mind that this teaching is absolutely not about degrading yourself, or belittling your real needs. In fact, what these teachings are saying is that it is the self-cherishing *mind* which is very selfish or very self-centred and egoistic. This is what is very negative and destructive.

Of course, we have to identify and recognise this self-cherishing mind or this attitude within oneself. We have and try to see what attitude we have in our mind. With a self-cherishing mind, our attitude is that, of course, we are above all other beings. With this attitude, all one sees is oneself and no one else. With this attitude we completely disregard other beings, whether they are happy or unhappy, or whether what we are doing is causing them any loss or any gain. The whole focus is on oneself.

On the other hand, in the teachings it is saying that instead of having a self-cherishing mind, we should have the mind of benefiting or helping other beings. We should think of the concerns of other beings, and care about them. The self-cherishing mind should be replaced with a mind of loving kindness and compassion towards other beings. On one hand, we have to see all the disadvantages of having this strong self-cherishing mind. On the other hand, try to see the advantages of cultivating the mind of cherishing other beings by thinking about the benefits of cherishing others, and about why we need to cherish them. To give just one reason why other beings deserve our love, our compassion, and why it is so appropriate to show love, compassion and regard for others – we can think about our own life from when we were just born. In the beginning, our evolution was completely due to the care we received from others, out of their love, kindness and compassion. We can see how we depended so much on others, and received love from them. Even at the end of our life, when we become very aged, again, our life is completely dependent upon others. All our hopes of living all depend on how much they can care for us, and show love and compassion for us.

So now, in the middle of one's life, it is very right and appropriate to take this opportunity to show love and compassion to other beings and to take care of them. It is very important in our daily life to consider the needs of other beings. Think about the actions you can take to bring happiness to others and to solve their problems, and consider and be aware of actions you can take to prevent causing harm to others' minds or bodies, their material possessions or relationships. If you can cultivate or generate some sense of genuine love and compassion towards others, once this attitude becomes natural, then in practice it becomes natural to be very considerate of the needs of other people.

Of course, one of the major reasons why a lot of us think that question whether should help other beings, is because we feel we hardly receive any help, true love or compassion from them. In our heart we always wish to have more friends, more people to be close to us - so much so that even we feel very overjoyed when some old enemies begin to show us some friendliness. We would like that. In our own heart, nothing gives us more joy or happiness than when others really show us a true feeling of love and compassion, true friendship. Something which creates more joy than just

receiving material wealth. If someone shares so much love, think how much joy you would feel by being close to that person. Even just hearing a few words, or having a few moments of conversation with that person brings so much joy.

If what you really wish is to receive such genuine love, friendship and the care and support from others, and you wonder how this has never happened - why there are not many others showing concern or care for your life or wellbeing - it shows that something in one's own mental attitude toward others is incorrect or faulty. It is turning others away. If we hold or bear this self-cherishing mind at the centre of our mind or attention, then of course there is no hope of gaining such friendship, genuine love and compassion from others. When we have this strong self-cherishing mind within us, then the only people who still care about us would generally be our parents. There are many instances when many parents, regardless of what their children do, or whether they're appreciated by them, always continuously worry about them, and try to support them and out of their love and compassion.

This shows the delusion in thinking that one should not help or show any care towards any other beings, because they do not care about you. It's important to understand that the reason why one does not receive much love and compassion from others is because one has to make effort in generating love and compassion towards others. And it shows how important to at least try to reduce the strength or the intensity of the self-cherishing mind – if not completely finishing it off.

There are so many instances in our life where we cause harm to someone who is an intimate friend, then later on we regret our actions. There are many daily actions that sometimes we cannot prevent ourselves from doing - even actions which are very hurtful to close friends. The driving force of the self-cherishing mind is why we cannot control such harmful actions. It's like a very strong force behind our actions. If we try to minimise this force, and try to bring greater qualities of love and compassion in our mind, then it becomes easier to prevent any harmful actions and to create beneficial actions. When you understand from your own experience how this self-cherishing mind operates, how strong it is, and uncontrollable your actions can be in terms of affecting other, then you can also better understand it's the same for other beings. So if someone close to you hurts you, you can understand that the cause is the self-cherishing mind. We can have a different perspective on the situation, and see that the person has no choice in what they are doing. Even if you receive something very unpleasant or undesirable to your way of thinking, you can have more understanding of their situation, helping you to remain tolerant and patient and to not be not so affected by their actions.

We will leave the teaching here and as usual chant the Buddha's mantra for seven times. Could people again sit in the meditation posture and just try to relax the body and calm the mind, then we focus on the mantra.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

© *Tara Institute*

---