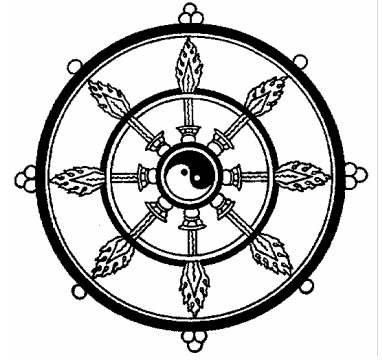


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

འདྲེན་སྐྱོད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



7 June 2000

We will begin with a few minutes breathing meditation together. Make yourself comfortable in a sitting posture, ensuring that your body is fully relaxed.

Think about how essential it is to bring peace and happiness to the mind. The only way that each of us can create inner peace and happiness is through our own efforts, through gaining control over the mind and transforming it. With this thought, we will begin the meditation.

Try to stabilise the mind by removing thoughts of external objects. Once you have removed all distracting thoughts, you'll find that the mind just abides within. Before you begin the breathing meditation, try to let the mind rest inward for a little while.

In the breathing meditation, we focus on the inhaling and exhaling of the breath. As you focus your mind, try to balance the intensity of your focus – making sure it is neither too relaxed nor too tight. Rather, your focus should be balanced, and just remain single-pointedly on the object. We will do this for a few minutes...

We will now continue the discussion on the thought transformation text, *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*. Verse 91 reads:

All the things we should do we do not do even once,
For improper behaviour takes up all our time.

This verse summarises what has been explained in great detail in the preceding verses about the disadvantages of self-cherishing. The verse reminds us that there are things we should do and things we should refrain from doing. But we never even get around to doing the things we should do, whereas we are continually doing wrong actions. What drives us to do this is the self-cherishing attitude.

When the verse talks about the things we should do, it refers to doing actions that create the cause for lasting happiness, liberation and enlightenment, and refraining from actions that are evil, negative or unwholesome. This is particularly important for people who call themselves spiritual practitioners. When they commit to a spiritual life, they should be doing only those actions that lead to the state of liberation. Instead, they continue to indulge in negative actions.

If we relate this verse to our own lives, we can learn to discriminate between what is beneficial and what is harmful. Such a clear understanding would motivate us to do only right actions and maintain a positive state of

mind. It's important that one focuses these teachings on oneself, rather than judging the attitudes and actions of others.

All our actions fall into one of three categories of body, speech or mind. The teachings talk about our actions coming through the 'three doors', of mind or speech and body. We need to continually check up and observe the actions of our three doors.

As we become aware of the actions that come through our three doors, we will see that certain actions harm others, and are regarded by them as unpleasant, rude or harsh. They also cause harm to us. On the other hand, we will realise that certain actions are beneficial. For instance, cultivating a positive mental attitude towards others can transform our whole personality, and transform all our actions into positive ones.

So, by developing self-awareness, we become clear about what actions to do and what not to do. This is the essence of dharma or spiritual practice – trying as much as possible to develop positive actions, while refraining from negative ones.

It's as if we need to continually talk to ourselves to work out whether our attitude and actions are right or wrong. If you say to yourself that an action is OK, that's fine. But if you tell yourself it's the wrong thing to do, you have to counteract it. If you know that you have certain faults, when others point those faults out to you, you won't be caught out and respond angrily. However, if you are not aware of your faults, you may be devastated when they are pointed out to you.

When we examine our actions, we need to work out not only the short-term but also the long-term consequences, which are actually more important. We tend to do things that offer a short-term or immediate benefit to ourselves, and not give ourselves enough time to examine long-term consequences. If there is no immediate advantage to an action and it involves some sort of hardship, we tend to avoid it.

However, if we examine more closely, we can see that there are many actions that we should be doing right now. Even though they don't bring us any immediate comfort, if they are of long-term benefit, they are beneficial. Even though you have to sacrifice some of your comfort, freedom and enjoyment, such actions are worth doing.

We can also see that many of the actions we categorise as negative may be of immediate benefit to us or even bring

profit or gain, but in the long-term may bring misery, loss and suffering. Such actions will only be a cause of strong regret. So, we lead the rest of our lives feeling guilty and bad about ourselves, causing our mind to be depressed.

This issue is especially important for young people. They need to be aware of the long- and short-term consequences of their actions. This attitude will help them to secure a good future. They can see how important it is, for instance, to get up early in the morning or stay up late at night to study or work. The future benefits are obvious to them.

On the other hand, if you spend your time pursuing enjoyment instead of studying or working or fulfilling your responsibilities, you will find no long-lasting satisfaction or enjoyment from those things.

We need to consciously strive to understand the benefits of positive states of mind and the shortcomings of negative states of mind, just as we consciously strive to be at our best, especially if we're heading out for a party or social event. At these times, you put a lot of effort into selecting the right clothes, putting on makeup, checking the colour of your lipstick, your clothes, your hair style, etc. You keep checking how you look in the mirror and, if you're not sure, you ask someone else for his or her opinion.

Geshe-la says that in a similar way we can check our mind and decide what frame of mind to maintain when we go out. If we don't do this, we can easily spoil a party. If you turn up and see that everyone else is far better dressed and looks better than you, you will feel bad. Or you may feel bad when someone makes a comment to you. It is very easy to generate a negative state of mind such as jealousy, which can cause us unhappiness. However, with good mental preparation, we can have a more stable mind.

The thing that prevents us from doing what we should do, but drives us to do what we shouldn't do is the inner enemy of the self-cherishing mind. The rest of the verse reads:

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.

We will finish tonight's teaching here and chant the Lord Buddha's mantra seven times. Sit in the meditation posture with a relaxed mind and body, and try to overcome all distracting thoughts. Then focus your mind on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

*Transcribed from the tapes by Gabrielle Thomson
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Edited Version*

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