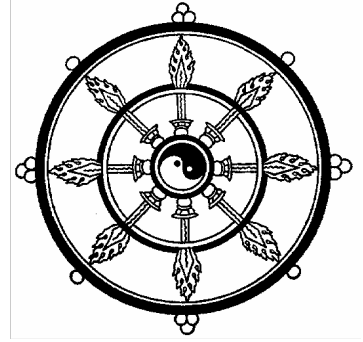


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

འོ་སྤྱོད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



28 June 2000

We'll do a few minutes breathing meditation first. Sit in a posture that's most convenient and relaxing for your body.

Before we begin, let's think over the essential points on why we practise meditation. The aim of meditation is to reduce our delusions. Many of our recurring problems result from some form of delusion.

If we examine the mind, we can see that we have no real control over it. The mind determines the way we experience life now and in the future. The reason we continue to experience problems and dissatisfaction is because the mind is totally under the control of the mental delusions.

As soon as we begin diminishing our mental delusions through meditation practice, we will see that the mind has more freedom and independence, which brings more happiness and peace into our lives.

So, the reason we engage in this meditation practice is to gain control over the mind, and free it from the power of mental delusions. With this in our mind, begin this meditation.

First, try to get rid of all distracting thoughts from the mind and let it fully settle within. After the mind is settled, begin the breathing meditation, in which you simply focus the mind on the out-breath and in-breath, without letting it drift towards any other object...

Now, you can rise from the meditation. If you are not careful, a sudden noise or sudden sound can frighten someone who is in deep meditation. So you have to be careful! If this happens, it shows that your mind is focusing well on the meditation object.

We will continue with the teaching on *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*. We are up to the last two lines of verse 92 (we did the first four lines last week). These two lines read:

Without any misgiving now wield your fierce weapon
And wrathfully swing it three times round your head.

When the lines say "wield your fierce weapon", this refers to a weapon that can counteract the wrong view of self-grasping. As we discussed last week, self-grasping is the root cause of all our problems and harmful actions. The weapon or remedy against self-grasping is the wisdom realising selflessness or emptiness.

We need to consider a few important points here. First, we need to recognise this self-grasping view that is said to be the root cause of our problems. Briefly, it is the misconception we have regarding the way the "I" (oneself) exists.

Ultimately, this "I" is empty of inherent, independent

existence – it does not exist from its own side. However, when we experience a deep sense of "I" – if we examine how the "I" exists, we will find that it appears to exist independently or inherently from its own side. This is the self-grasping that we've been talking about.

To overcome self-grasping, we have to cultivate its opposite – the wisdom that realises the selflessness or lack of inherent existence of this "I" or self which, on the other hand, is apprehended by self-grasping as being inherently existent. We must be very clear about this point – the only way to counteract self-grasping is to generate its opponent force, the wisdom that realises selflessness.

If we use the wisdom of selflessness to fight self-grasping, wisdom will automatically win. Why? Because whatever is seen or perceived by this wisdom is aligned with reality, and can be validated by reasoning. The view held by self-grasping, on the other hand, cannot be validated by reasoning.

Generally, if our mind holds any wrong ideas or wrong views, the only way to correct them is to cultivate a correct view, and build positive mental habits within the mind. The mind can be controlled by one of two forces – negative or positive. Because these two directly oppose each other, when we develop the mind's positive forces, the negative forces will naturally diminish.

For example, if we take anger as an expression of the mind's negative force, we need to apply the opposite of anger – patience – to conquer it.

However, we normally don't think like this. We even feel that retaliation is a better alternative to patience, and that not retaliating means 'losing'. So, whenever another person harms us, we try to retaliate and harm that person, possibly inflicting even more harm than we received from them.

If they speak harshly to us, we try to say something harsher in return; if they physically harm us, we try to be even more aggressive in return. In such situations, this seems like the right thing to do. In fact, from a worldly point of view, defeating the enemy and retaliating is regarded as normal behaviour. Trying to be friendly and letting the enemy 'win', on the other hand, is regarded as unusual or eccentric behaviour.

If we think carefully about this, when our response to receiving harm from others is to harm them back, for example, with harsh speech, do we really benefit? In fact, such a response is like throwing dry wood onto a fire and fuelling it even more. It is only a cause to increase our anger and hatred. With such intense anger and hatred

raging inside us, we are completely deprived of any peace and happiness.

So, what the text is saying is that we have to realise that self-grasping is the root cause of our problems. It also infers that the root cause of any problem we face in day-to-day life – in our relationships, in living with others, and so on – is found within us.

Normally, we view outer conditions as the cause of our problems, such as conflict in our relationships. In fact, if one thinks about it deeply, outer conditions are not to blame – the real cause lies within oneself. As long as we do not deal with the real cause, there will be no end to our problems.

We have habituated ourselves to continually provoking others, creating conflict in response to outer conditions, which are usually trivial. If this problem arises repeatedly, it seriously undermines our happiness. We should try to remember what Shantideva said – that while it is impossible to get rid of all our outer enemies, it is possible to get rid of our inner enemies, which in this case is our own anger. Getting rid of the inner enemy is equivalent to getting rid of all our outer enemies.

We should also try to remember what Lord Buddha said – that we have been closely related to all other sentient beings. If we got rid of our anger or hatred towards all other beings, we would feel much closer to them.

In short, other people and outer conditions are not the main source of our problems. When you think deeply about it, the cause of your unending problems lies within yourself. As we have discussed, the cause is our built-in negative mental habits. If we honestly examine our own experience, we can find many instances that confirm the existence of this wrong way of thinking.

For instance, some days you may get angry with strangers or people outside of your family, and are unable to resolve the conflict. Later, when you get home, you find yourself arguing and getting angry with the person you live with over the most trivial thing. The next moment, you give vent to all your anger, not just the irritation triggered a moment earlier, but all the anger you had generated towards the stranger earlier in the day as well.

Whenever we generate negative states of mind like anger and hatred, the victims are often those who are close to us. Consequently, the suffering that an uncontrolled state of mind such as anger can bring to our lives can be enormous. So, practising meditation and following spiritual teachings are exercises we do to counteract our own delusions.

As the famous thought transformation master, Geshe Potowa, once said, if your practice counteracts delusions, it is dharma or spiritual practice; if it does otherwise, it is not dharma. Whenever we engage in spiritual practice, the most we should expect is that it will directly counteract our mental delusions. If it does not do this, we should at least expect it to reduce our delusions.

We must direct our spiritual practice towards our delusions, and have great confidence that they can be completely uprooted from the mind. Although powerful

delusions will arise within the mind when the conditions are right – such as anger, attachment, ignorance or self-grasping – we should recall that they are all adventitious. They only reside temporarily in the mind; they are not in the fundamental or intrinsic nature of the mind. This means that if you apply a remedy to these delusions, you can completely eradicate them and separate them from your mind.

When the lines say “wield your fierce weapon” – the wisdom of selflessness – if you imagine someone wielding a weapon such as a hammer who was to “wrathfully swing it three times round your head”, you would be knocked unconscious. Here, swinging the hammer of the wisdom of selflessness three times means to knock out the wrong view of self-grasping; then strike out at its product, the self-cherishing attitude; and then overcome the product these two, which is the contaminated aggregates that constitute our existence. We would then have abandoned all three.

There are many wrathful-looking deities who hold all kinds of weapons that are directed at the inner enemy. However, modern technology has given us many more weapons – all of which are directed outside, towards others!

The famous Geshe Ben said he would hold a spear or weapon for only one reason – to destroy his own inner enemies. He said that the more vigilant and alert the inner enemy is, the more vigilant you have to be. But when the inner enemy relaxes, you too can relax.

We will leave the teaching here. Now we will chant Buddha’s mantra. Please resume a relaxed meditation posture, and remove all the distracting thoughts from the mind. Focus your mind on the mantra as we chant it.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYA SOHA

Transcribed from the tapes by Gabrielle Thomson

Edited by Mary-Lou Considine

Edited checked by Sandup Tsering

Edited Version

© Tara Institute
