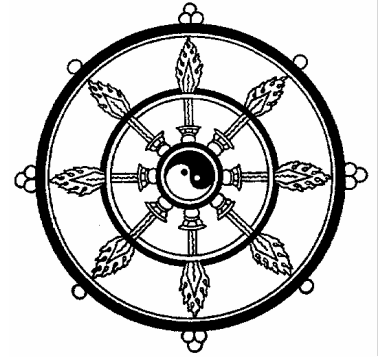


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

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We will begin with a few minutes breathing meditation. Sit in the meditation posture, making sure you are comfortable and that your body is fully relaxed.

If we can relax the mind as well as the body, we can enjoy complete rest. So try to bring the mind inward, by getting rid of all outgoing thoughts. Then, begin the breathing meditation, in which the mind focuses on the inhaling and exhaling of the breath with single-pointed concentration, preventing any distracting thoughts from arising during the meditation.

The first two lines of verse 93 from the text *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons* say:

With all of your fierceness come smash this foul enemy!

Burst ego-concepts with your wisdom's great might!

Here, the author is making a plea to the wrathful-looking deity, Yamantaka, who has a fierce-looking face with bared fangs, and a fierce posture. These lines request Yamantaka to help us completely destroy the self-grasping attitude.

These lines also encourage us to learn about our one true enemy – the self-grasping view, *and* the self-cherishing mind within us. We should try to overcome our normal belief that the cause of all our problems is external, that other people and things outside of us are our enemies.

Rather, we need to think about the problems that this inner self-centred, self-cherishing mind has brought us. Even the fact that we have little tolerance for small inconveniences or trivial problems and regard them as serious obstacles – if we look at why we exaggerate them, it's really just a projection of the self-cherishing mind.

In fact, the more we understand the self-cherishing mind and all of its faults, the more we will understand the outer world and other people. With a better understanding of others, we can develop more care, compassion and love for them.

The whole aim of our spiritual practice is to replace this self-cherishing mind with the mind that cherishes other beings. This is of great benefit. If, instead, we just let our self-cherishing mind rest peacefully at the very core of our heart, we would have no hope of benefiting ourselves, let alone of benefiting others. We would have no hope of getting what we wished for, and getting rid of what we did not wish for.

As we begin to see the destructive and negative aspects of this self-cherishing mind, we will begin to see the need to get rid of it. However, we need to be very clear that

this does not mean undermining our need to be responsible for ourselves, to care for ourselves and to maintain a sense of dignity. Rather, it means that if we want to live a happier, more successful, and more satisfying life, we have to get rid of this self-cherishing mind.

In fact, looking after our own interest is just as important as looking after the interests of other beings. We need to respect our own life and take care of ourselves properly. We alone are responsible for meeting with the things that make us happy and avoiding the things that cause us to suffer. No one else can achieve our goals for us.

Taking responsibility for ourselves depends on our own mind. It is our mind that enables us to achieve happiness and eliminate suffering. Until now, the type of mind that has had the most influence on us has been the self-cherishing mind, which has brought us the opposite of what we want. The self-cherishing mind, which has been at the core of our heart, has caused us to neglect others and disregard their needs.

This thought transformation teaching shows us is how this mind is wrong – in fact, instead of making us happier, the self-cherishing mind has the opposite effect. The aim of these teachings is to encourage us to replace the self-cherishing mind with the mind that shows respect and kind-heartedness towards other beings.

The term "towards other beings" includes all other sentient beings. However, our practice of this teaching will always begin with showing love and kindness to those "other beings" who are closest to us. The practice means that, as much as possible, we must try to always be kind towards others, and be as honest and helpful as we can from our own side.

The term "from our own side" is also important, because it means that we are the only judge of our actions. Only we can judge whether our actions are sincere and honest. The true value of our actions is not determined by the acknowledgement or the opinions of others.

The verse continues:

With your boundless compassion protect us from suffering

The miseries caused by our self-centred actions;

Destroy our self-cherishing once and for all!

The author, the famous Indian master Dharmarakshita, is petitioning the deity Yamantaka, because Yamantaka is one of his principal deities. However, if other people have their own special deity, like Tara, Chenrezig, or any

other favourite object of spiritual practice such as the Lord Buddha – whatever spiritual object you feel closest to, it's good to pray to that holy object and request inspiration or blessings to overcome any form of mental delusions that you find disturbing, such as uncontrolled anger, pride, jealousy, or this very selfish mind.

When this verse says: "With your boundless compassion protect us from suffering ...", we should also understand that we all, to some extent, possess similar qualities – compassion and the loving kindness within our minds. We must appreciate the value and preciousness of those qualities.

If we relate these lines to our own lives, the author is talking about the value of increasing the love and compassion that we already possess. The basis of the Lord Buddha's teaching is non-harmfulness or compassion. Therefore, if we want to follow a spiritual path, we have to understand that the only way to make progress is to develop the love and compassion that we already have within us.

We must try to feel inspired in our daily life to show love and compassion towards other beings, to be kind and helpful. On the basis cultivating a good heart and compassion, we can make gradual progress in our spiritual training.

Geshe-la said that's all for tonight's teaching, but if anyone has a question, there is time for maybe one question.

Student: If you begin meditation practice, and your mind is agitated, it can be very hard to direct the mind to the meditation object.

Geshe Doga: Geshe-la says that in this case, the breathing meditation is the most effective antidote, because the technique is so simple. You don't have to think about or analyse anything. The breath is already there. You just focus the mind on it. It's very easy.

If, however, you have to focus the mind on a deity, this involves some sort of visualisation, which can be difficult.

Someone who is familiar with the practice of visualising a deity and has a strong bond of faith and a feeling of intimacy with that deity may be able to do this readily. Their practice may be effective due to their familiarity with visualising that particular deity, and to their special connection with and deep faith in the deity. By just remembering the deity, they might immediately receive blessings, and remove any obstacles to their meditation.

Generally speaking, however, the breathing meditation is the most effective for immediately overcoming distracted states of mind.

It's the same in meditation. Until now, whenever we engaged in meditation practice, we tried to bring the mind inward. Then, when we tried to place the mind on the meditation object, it was not there! So, we made another attempt to bring it inwards, but then it was gone again.

Because the mind has played this trick on us so many times, it has become good at it, and we have no real hope

of settling the mind inward within a short space of time. So it is recommended that beginners keep their meditation sessions short. This is more beneficial.

If you find the mind is very distracted and agitated, try to relax and don't try to start the meditation. Rather, just try to think of nothing, holding no objects in the mind. Through this kind of relaxation, we might be able to overcome distraction and settle the mind inward.

Some people find that when they engage in meditation practice, their mind seems more distracted and agitated than when they are not meditating.

The reason we experience more restlessness and distracting thoughts when we sit down to meditate may be that our mind is not used to resting. It's the same with the body. Some 'workaholics' find it very hard to rest on weekends, when there is nothing to do. They feel as if they should be always doing something. Once they stop, begin to feel bad and agitated.

It's the same with the mind. Because the mind is normally preoccupied with distraction and is not used to being at peace, engaging in meditation can make it bored and agitated. Sometimes, it helps to actually do some type of physical work, and at the same time keep your mind engaged with that activity. Then, just as this can exhaust your body, it can also exhaust your mind, so that it can rest. You might even then sleep better!

The mind needs to be preoccupied to something worthwhile or beneficial, because when it is not, it can create unnecessary problems for yourself and others.

There are cases of families who spend a lot of their time at home watching TV and doing nothing much else except sleeping. You will notice that often in such families, the husband and wife are always arguing. Even the children seem restless and unhappy. For the parents of such families, it is better to go out and find a job and occupy themselves, rather than stay home. Then, they can improve their financial situation, and afford to do things that they really want to do. This can be very creative and beneficial. But doing nothing can create unnecessary problems.

We will now chant the Buddha's mantra. As before, sit in the meditation posture, relaxing both mind and body. Then, when we begin the chanting, we should focus the mind on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYA SOHA

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Edited Version

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