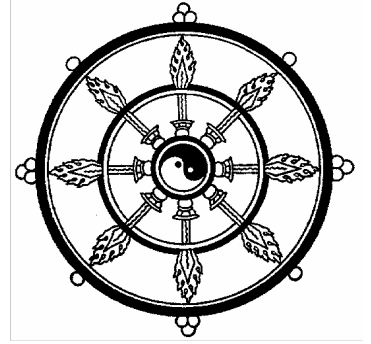


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

འདྲེན་གྱི་ལྷོ་མཚོ་མ་ཚུལ་ལྟེན་པོ།



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As usual, first we'll do some breathing meditation. Just make yourself comfortable in a sitting posture, fully relaxing your body. At the same time, we should also try to relax our mind, and find peace and happiness within it. When both our mind and body are resting at the same time, then there is no doubt that we find ourselves truly at rest.

When we engage in meditation practice we are guarding our mind. We need to know what we are guarding the mind from. We are guarding it from the influence of outer distractions and from any mental delusions. Meditation practice works in the sense that through it, when we are able to stop all these outer distractions or mental delusions from arising, we naturally enhance the peace and happiness within our mind. We also find that our mind is more settled within, in a sense by bringing together the mind's energy or focus. Keep all this in mind, just before we begin this breathing meditation. First of all we have to try to make some effort to fully settle our mind inward by removing all the outgoing thoughts. Once we have done this, we begin this meditation. The meditation itself is just to place the focus of the mind on the in-breath and out-breath, not getting distracted by any other objects.

Continuing the discussion on the thought transformation text, *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*, we left last week's teaching at verse 93, the final line of which says:

Destroy our self-cherishing once and for all!

In this line, we are making a request to the wrathful-looking deity, Yamantaka, to eliminate this self-cherishing mind within us. From what has already been outlined in the above verse, it is assumed that we have fully recognised all the faults or downfalls of self-cherishing. So, we are very motivated and determined to challenge and eliminate this attitude. We pray to Yamantaka to send forth his blessing or inspiration to help us eliminate this self-cherishing mind.

In the next verse, the first two lines read:

With all of the sufferings that others experience,
Smother completely our selfish concern.

These lines refer to the meditation called 'giving and taking'. This meditation literally says, 'May all the suffering of all other sentient beings in this worldly existence fall upon this self-cherishing mind'. The purpose is to eliminate this mind. We also take on all the suffering that exists onto this self-cherishing mind because it is this mind that is the source or cause of all suffering. With the meditation of giving and taking, we give our happiness to all other sentient beings but take

all their sufferings upon ourselves. We take it upon the self-cherishing mind that resides within the very core of our heart. To be able to do this meditation very effectively, and to understand this technique properly, we need to know the meaning of cultivating love and compassion towards other beings. The intensity of the love we feel towards other beings motivates us to give happiness to them.

Therefore, what is the meaning of love? The meaning of love is something which you feel towards other beings who do not have enough happiness, or who are deprived of happiness. With love, there is a strong feeling of wanting to give them your happiness, because you cannot bear to see them unhappy. That kind of feeling that you show towards others is love. On the other hand, compassion is something you generate when you observe other sentient beings who are experiencing suffering and pain. Again your feeling of compassion is something you show towards them because you cannot bear to see them suffering. Compassion is therefore defined as a genuine wish or intention to free/liberate others from suffering. Whereas love is the intention of wishing others to possess/have happiness. Therefore, in order to engage in this meditation of giving and taking, it is necessary to have generated this true feeling of love and compassion towards other beings.

It's very important to give more thought to our understanding of the meaning of love and compassion. We all have some reserves of love and compassion, even if it is only for a few select people and is discriminatory. If we study the meaning of love and compassion as outlined in the spiritual teachings and as outlined earlier, love is a feeling of giving, of wishing others to have happiness. Compassion is a feeling of wishing others to be free from suffering and problems. They are feelings you generate based upon your observation of other beings and their situations. For example, with true love in your mind, if you see someone suffering from poverty and enjoying no happiness in their life, as soon as you see them you automatically can't bear to see their suffering and you feel their problems and their difficulties. There is an automatic feeling of love, so you want to share the problems or difficulties you observe in others. Imagine if we have this in our hearts towards all those we regard as close to us, like our parents, children, partners, friends or so forth. If we have true love and compassion towards them, naturally it becomes much easier to show them tolerance. It becomes more natural for us to be considerate of their situation. There will be less reason to show them hatred, become angry and lose our temper towards them or abuse them, and so on.

It can become quite familiar for us to say to others - especially those who are close to us - that we love and care about them. Yet if we check, we can see how we have very little room for tolerance towards them, and how easily we become upset towards them. Even worse, as soon as we observe them having some problem or undergoing a downfall in their life, we don't want to get involved. We want to distance ourselves from them, which in a sense is completely opposite to the feeling of true love and compassion. With true love and compassion, for instance, true love means your feeling of giving to others is even stronger if their situation is desperate. Likewise, it's even stronger if you see them undergoing some misery or problem in their life. Obviously, there may be some element of true love and compassion towards those close to us. However, we need to perfect and develop those qualities, because our feeling of love and compassion is tainted with desire. With what we call love, when it is stained with desire, it is natural that we will remain close to that person we 'love', as long as they can serve our purposes and desires. The factor in another person which fulfils your desire could be anything. The moment that factor disappears, when the person you 'love' undergoes some downfall, you may automatically lose interest in that person. What previously you called 'love' towards that person suddenly disappears like a rainbow. As said before, it disappears at a time when that love should be more manifest, more obvious. This shows how badly your love is tainted with desire.

All the world's major religions talk about the value of this love and compassion in our lives. Even in wedding ceremonies here - although Geshe-la said he can't be fully sure because of his lack of English - but what he has heard sounds like you take a vow to each other to take care of each other and specifically in times of sickness. This also shows the value of love and compassion. Therefore, we have to understand how important it is to maintain that love and compassion as much as possible. If we wonder if others have love or compassion for us, if there is any self-interest, we know this indicates that they are not showing complete love and compassion to us-even though they share something in common with us. Because their own interest is in befriending us, it is not true love and compassion. Still, they have some true love for us as well as their own interest. However, if their interest becomes stronger and they make more use of you to serve their own purpose - you wouldn't like that. Of course, then you wouldn't see that person as somebody who shows you love.

In terms of our practice, we cannot expect to perfect our love and compassion quickly. But it is something we always have to be aware of. We have to try to make an effort, stage by stage, to try to develop/cultivate more love and compassion in the true sense. It is important not only to try to understand the benefits true love and compassion can bring to our life and how it can change our life. Love and compassion is something we have to know from our own experience as well, because in our experience, as said before, love is so often mixed with desire and attachment. The reason it is mixed with

desire and attachment is because there is something in others that appeals to us and our mind. Because of that feeling however, somehow at the same time, we can also have some element of love and compassion towards them. We may also feel that if they face some problems, we may also want to help them out. Again, why do we want to help them out? That's also based on our desire, not completely because of the other's situation. The love that we show them is not lasting or reliable. It is conditional upon your self-interest, upon something in them that you like.

Try and think now what cultivating true love and compassion means in our practice. First of all we need to try to train our mind to generate this love and compassion. Then we have to always try to consider, focus and aim our mind upon the needs of others. Then we have to think about how to benefit them, or prevent harming them. In terms of our daily actions, we can see that there are actions we should do to benefit them, and there are certain actions that we need to cease because they can be a cause of harm to others. If you integrate such a practice of adopting right actions and abandoning wrong actions, this is true spiritual practice. Someone who integrates such actions in their life - someone who mainly considers others in terms of benefiting them and preventing harm to them - is naturally regarded by others as somebody who is a very kind person, to be praised and admired by others. Also if we consider developing a sustainable or very healthy relationship, then one of the main causes is having faith in each other. Conversely, when there is no such faith, it is so easy to become very suspicious of each other and whatever is said or done. Without this faith, there is no firm basis for the relationship. Even though you are with someone, somehow you can't fully trust living with that person and enjoy his or her companionship. And yet how difficult you would find it to live without depending on that person. Imagine living your whole life like that with constant ups and downs, not sure whether we are happy with our life or not. Like this, life ends. But on the other hand, there can be so much meaning if we cultivate this true feeling of love towards each other. And through this love, as said, some deep-down trust and faith would result so that no matter who you're living with, there's always a feeling of ease in your mind. You feel care, and share care, with other person. When we talk of relationships, if we bring more love into them, it can be more meaningful to ourselves and to others.

Now we are finished with the teaching and we'll chant the Buddha's mantra. As at the beginning of this session, try to sit in the meditation posture, relaxing our mind and body and removing all distracting thoughts. Then just try to chant this mantra and while doing so, focus the mind just on its sound.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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