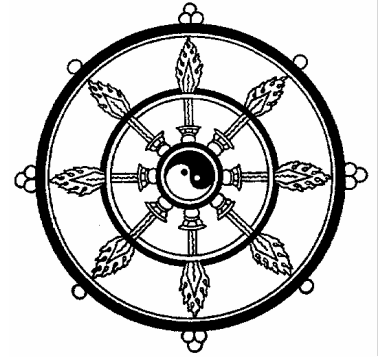


# Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

ཨོ ལྷོ་སྤྱད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



26 July 2000

As usual, we will begin with a few minutes of breathing meditation together. Make yourself as comfortable as possible in the sitting posture.

We need to be clear about what we are trying to achieve by engaging in meditation, and the benefits that it can offer us. Obviously, first we have to think about the difference between engaging in meditation or spiritual practice and engaging worldly or mundane activities.

When we engage in worldly activities, most of our time and attention is directed towards satisfying the external conditions of our lives. We try to find out what will be beneficial to us, what to acquire, and what to get rid of. We direct our efforts towards avoiding things that bring us loss, and creating the causes for what we perceive to be gains.

One obvious reason for following a spiritual path is that the external efforts we make to avoid or acquire external objects do not solve all our problems. No matter how many external problems we solve, we still face further problems. No matter how many favourable external conditions we create, it is never enough. Life never feels 100% - there is always something missing. We never feel truly happy or satisfied.

This is why we engage in meditation practice - to achieve favourable internal conditions. When you engage in meditation practice, it is always important to make sure that your whole mental focus is on yourself, specifically on your own mind. Try to see that there is something within yourself that can bring some gain to your life. We have the capacity to create positive or negative conditions within ourselves. Just as we outwardly discriminate between what is good or bad for us, in the same way, if we focus the mind inward and really examine it, we can discriminate between the good and bad within ourselves.

Our state of mind can be positive or negative. We can see how easily we get into the habit of generating negative states of mind that bring harm to our lives. No matter how many external problems we solve, unless we overcome this inner negativity, we will continue to experience problems.

Before we follow engage in meditation practice, we must understand why we are doing it. We have to be very clear about this. If we check within ourselves, we will see that there is something inside us that never lets us rest, never lets us find peace and happiness. We practise meditation to counteract this internal source of problems,

which is the negative states of mind.

Obviously, if our mind is calm, happy and peaceful, naturally we will be also be happy and peaceful. While inner happiness and peace are essential for us, we must also take responsibility for sustaining that inner environment. The most important cause for sustaining inner peace and happiness is the state of mind we habitually generate. We have to make some effort to maintain the right mental attitude. If you regard your state of mind as the immediate source of your own happiness and peace, you will always be mindful of maintaining a positive attitude.

We have to be sure that in making material progress, we also maintain this inner source of peace and happiness. Then, whatever success we achieve in the external world can be a source of happiness and satisfaction. But if we fail to sustain the most important cause of inner peace and happiness - that is, our own mental attitude - then even if we become wealthy, this wealth may become a source of problems and fear, rather than bringing more comfort, security and satisfaction.

To follow meditation practice or a spiritual path properly, our main practice must be focussing on our own mind and removing the inner cause of our problems. When we talk about renunciation in following a spiritual practice, we mean discarding negative states of mind within us, like anger towards other beings, jealousy, competing with others, and pride. These are the things we have to renounce. Getting rid of them will result in a happier life.

True happiness is not something we find by discarding or running away from our partners, material possessions, relatives, or friends. Running away from these external things won't lead us to paradise. But, if we realise the importance of overcoming or even minimising negative states of mind such as anger, hatred and pride towards each other, we can sustain our happiness, regardless of our outer wealth, comfort or relationships. When you are able to counteract these negative states of mind, then whatever external conditions you encounter, you can live a stable life with lasting peace and happiness.

Could we now begin the breathing meditation. As said before, remember that the focus of our practice is internal. Begin the practice by first of all trying to sit in the appropriate posture, fully relaxing the body, then checking the mind. If the mind is under the influence of external distractions, we make an effort to remove all these distractions. Before beginning the meditation, we

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have to make sure the mind is fully stabilised inward. Having done this, we begin the breathing meditation, in which we focus the mind single-pointedly on the inhalation and exhalation of our breath.

Geshe-la wondered whether anyone has a question to ask.

*Question:* Is it good to do some breathing meditation before doing any other meditation?

*Answer:* Geshe-la says that the breathing meditation is particularly effective for immediately calming our mind. Once the mind is calmed, it's easy for us to focus on whatever meditation or practice we wish to do next.

Since there are no further questions, we will do a little bit more of the commentary on this thought-transformation text (*The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*). We are up to the Verse 94, which we touched on in last week's teaching. This verse concerns the technique of cultivating and developing a feeling of love and compassion towards all other sentient beings in conjunction with the giving-and-taking meditation practice.

The whole purpose of engaging in giving-and-taking meditation is to intensify or fully develop one's love and compassion towards all other sentient beings. Eventually, one would be able to actively benefit other beings, in terms of removing the causes of their problems, fulfilling their needs, and so forth. Before we actually apply the meditation technique of giving-and-taking to intensify the love and compassion within the mind, we should try to generate as genuine a feeling of love and compassion in the mind as possible.

To generate true love and compassion for other sentient beings, we first have to bring all other beings into one's mind, and reflect upon their situation. We can reflect upon how there are many sentient beings who are completely deprived of any happiness, joy, or pleasure. There are also many beings tormented by immense pain and suffering.

After doing this, you can try to cultivate love – try to really feel within yourself the feelings of those beings who lack happiness. By feeling their unhappiness, you will begin to feel that their situation is unbearable for you. Cultivating true love is cultivating a genuine desire or wish to give them the happiness that they do not possess. Likewise, by thinking about their suffering and feeling that it is unbearable, you will feel a strong desire to free them from suffering. This is the real meaning of love and compassion.

Having done this, one can then engage in the giving-and-taking meditation. You can do this in conjunction with the breathing technique. With the outgoing breath, one can imagine giving all one's virtues to other beings. As you breathe out through your right nostril, you can imagine giving away all the virtues you have accumulated, even the virtues you will accumulate in the future.

As one breathes out through one's right nostril, you visualise rays of light going out to all other sentient beings who do not possess happiness. These rays of light

enter their left nostril and, as soon as it enters them, they find all the happiness and joy they do not have. When you have breathed out, you can imagine having fully satisfied all other sentient beings by giving them happiness.

As you breathe in, you imagine inhaling dark smoke through your left nostril. Imagine that you are taking upon yourself all the suffering and pain of other sentient beings. As you breathe in through your left nostril, this suffering enters into you and dissolves the self-cherishing or self-centred mind. This causes the self-cherishing mind to vanish completely. By breathing in all the suffering of other sentient beings in the form of this dark smoke, you dissolve the self-cherishing mind and cause it to disappear. It's important to feel as if there's no trace of dark smoke left within oneself. You imagine that you and all other sentient beings are free of suffering, and that you have also completely overcome the self-centred mind.

We will leave tonight's teaching here. As usual, we will finish by chanting Buddha's mantra seven times. Could people again sit in the meditation posture, and relax the body and calm the mind by removing all distracting thoughts. Then try to focus the mind just on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYA SOHA

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