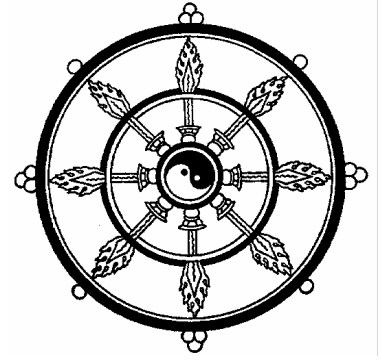


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

ཨྱ ལྷོ་སྤྱད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



9 August 2000

As usual, we'll begin with a few minutes breathing meditation. Make sure your sitting posture is comfortable and you are fully relaxed. Then, try to generate the thought or intention to have your mind fully under control. The aim of the meditation is to stop the mind from falling under the influence of distracting thoughts, even for a second.

With the intention of wanting to fully control the mind, you should then try to bring the mind fully inward by removing all the external distractions. Once you have achieved this, you can begin the breathing meditation, simply focussing the mind on inhaling and exhaling. As you do this, you should make sure your mental focus is moderate - that is, that the mind's focus on the breath is neither too tight, nor too loose.

We will now continue our discussions on the thought transformation text called *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*, verse 95 which reads;

Though we have not a doubt, for we recognise fully
The cause and the root of mistakes we all make,
If there is still left a part of our minds that would tend
To support this delusion of self that we have,
Then destroy the firm hold of this part of our minds
That, against our true wishes, makes fools of us still.

In this verse, the teaching explains that even if we have been successful in recognising what the root cause of all our problems and mistakes is, we still continue to fall under the control of that root cause - the self cherishing mind. This has been mentioned in great detail in this text. Although we may have come to understand how the self-cherishing mind is the root cause of all our problems through the teachings and the kindness of our spiritual master, we still continue to fall under its influence. We are still ruled by the self-cherishing mind.

Without actually understanding how the self-cherishing mind works and trying to see how it operates within our own minds, it is possible that we may get the wrong impression about what the teachings are saying. We understand from the teachings that the self-cherishing mind is something very negative, because it serves as the source of problems not only for ourselves, but also for others. However, it is important not to misinterpret what the teachings say by misconstruing the objection to the self-cherishing mind as an objection to our own needs and goals. The teachings are not undermining our own interest and certainly not degrading ourselves.

We need to be very clear in our mind about the most effective way to achieve what we want to achieve, and live the life we want to live. It is also very important to

always feel a strong sense of self-responsibility because achieving goals is dependent on ourselves.

Therefore, when we talk of the self-cherishing mind, we are talking of some destructive force that not only brings harm to other beings, but is also a number one enemy to our own life and achieving our goals. In fact, we sort of see it as a down-side of human nature in other beings, but unfortunately not in terms of ourselves. For instance, when we say, "He has a big ego," we are complaining about him. Precisely, our complaint is not directed at him as person but at self-cherishing within him. What is important is to turn the focus back on ourselves and to recognize that we too have a self-cherishing mind and ego problem. Although it is very easy to point to faults in other beings and tell them what to do, to recognise, acknowledge and take corrective measure against our own faults we need to hear teachings like this all the time and work very hard with practice

Quite often what we say and do may be very hurtful to others but we are not aware of that and are careless about others. This is an indication of infiltration of self-cherishing into our actions. What is self-cherishing? It is a mental attitude of strongly holding onto ourself as the most precious being who should be the only possessor of all goodness and free from all troubles.

With self-cherishing we have very strong desire to achieve and possess the best for ourselves, for instance, in terms of material wealth, a good name and so on. In this state of mind we do not realise that other people also seek and deserve the best and the most.

If we examine the type of actions we do out of self-cherishing motivation, we will see that they jeopardise our relationship with other beings including those are close to and care about us, such as our partner, parents, children, friends and the rest. In order to sustain harmonious relationship we need to truly love them and consider their needs. We should not be just protecting our interest. The fact that self-cherishing makes us think of ourselves as the center of the world, and sometime as perfect - in sense of not being prepared to take any criticism - actually makes our lives more difficult and miserable. As a result of such an attitude, regardless of their true feeling for us, our perspective is that all other beings seem like enemies.

Therefore, the message in this teaching is that self-cherishing is the main obstacle to achieve our goals and the problems we face all are rooted in it. In a way all our problems are self-cherishing problems - not being able to make content the self-cherishing mind. Furthermore, if

we examine the nature of that self-cherishing problem, then it is the lack of love and compassion for other beings within us. The more we allow our self-cherishing mind to control our lives, the less we care, love and think about other beings. Sometime we undergo suffering which could become happiness if we possess love for other beings.

For example, out of self-cherishing some people are pompous about their body being very attractive. They think no one else is as beautiful as them; in fact underneath they do not even wish to see any other beautiful person. But, unfortunately, sooner or later they would see or hear of others who are beautiful, and this would shock their mind with jealousy and knock them down in deep suffering. This event shows that the reason we feel jealous of other people because of their goodness is that we don't love and care about others. If we loved others, then the fact that they possess goodness would bring us joy instead of jealousy. For example, when parents see their children finding happiness and goodness, they feel an enormous sense of pleasure and happiness.

If we also consider the main things that bring happiness and suffering to our lives, we will find it is our own mental attitude and the way of thinking that we adopt towards different aspects of our lives. It is not correct to think that the suffering and problems we experience always comes from external factors like other people. We have to stop categorising some people as friends by viewing them as a source of benefits, and by viewing some others as enemies and as the source of our problems. In reality, it is mainly our way of thinking which determines our state of feelings, whether it is happiness or unhappiness. The teachings say we should cultivate impartial love and compassion to all beings equally, whether they are friends or enemies. Accordingly, if we engage in meditation practice and generate this impartial love and compassion, then even our enemies become friends and a source of ever-lasting happiness. We should try to cultivate this impartial love and compassion by putting a little effort in each day on a consistent basis. Then, gradually we can see this love growing and see its profound benefits on our lives and the lives of other beings.

We will leave the teaching here for tonight and as usual, we will chant the Buddha's mantra seven times. Again, adopt the meditation position and make sure the body is fully relaxed and the mind is fully brought inward. Then as we chant the mantra, try to focus the mind just on the mantra, without being distracted by any other external objects.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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