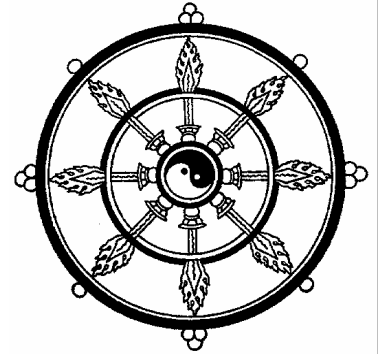


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

འཇིགས་མེད་མཚོ་ཆེན་པོ་འཁོར་ལོ་།



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First of all, we'll do the usual breathing meditation for a few minutes. Choose a comfortable sitting posture and make sure your body is fully relaxed. Next, try to settle your mind fully inward. This means getting rid of the normal state of mind which is very undisciplined and uncontrolled in the sense that it is always occupied and racing after all sorts of objects. Before beginning, try to generate a genuine and very strong motivation about what you should be doing in this meditation practice. Right at this moment, just let your mind be within by removing all distracting thoughts. Try to think of these thoughts settling and having a peaceful state of mind. We then engage in breathing meditation. What we do in this meditation is to discipline or train your mind to just sit and focus on in and out breath. (*Pause for meditation.*)

Tonight we continue our discussion on the thought transformation text, *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*. Our discussion is now on Verse 97, which reads:

Thus accepting ourselves all deluded non-virtuous
Actions that others have done in the past,
In the present and future with mind, speech and
body,
May delusions of others as well as our own
Be the favoured conditions to gain our enlightenment,
Just as the peacocks eat poison and thrive.

What is said in this verse relates to, or supports, what was said in the previous verse where the main teaching was on the practice or meditation of 'giving and taking'. This is the meditation where you 'take' upon yourself all that is not desired by all other beings, which is suffering and the causes of suffering. But then you 'give' to all others what they want—happiness and the sources of happiness. The source of happiness is giving your own virtuous merits and your own goodness and so on, to all beings. This verse gives further explanation and teaching on this meditation. You pray that other beings' suffering and its causes, delusions and negative karma that you take from them be the cause to achieve enlightenment rather than of experiencing suffering. Also think that by achieving complete enlightenment, may you be able to benefit all other sentient beings. The analogy here of a peacock which lives on eating poison yet it is a beautiful-looking bird, clearly shows that even though you take upon the delusions and the karma of all other beings, which is the source suffering, and is undesirable for others, for you it becomes a favourable condition to achieve complete enlightenment to benefit all other beings.

Of course, in this meditation of giving and taking, what

you are giving and taking is just in your imagination, and has no direct benefits to other beings. So, is there any point in undertaking this meditation? Yes, we shall find this a most effective way to cultivate loving kindness and to actually benefit other beings by alleviating their sufferings and meeting their needs. If we examine why we do not actively engage in any benevolent acts is mainly because of the lack of motivation and thought to help others. If we talk in terms of the practice of giving, it is not the lack of what can be given that stops us from performing the practice—for instance wealth, skills and other advantages and resources we may possess. What stops us benefiting others enough is due to the lack of enough *thought* of giving love and compassion. In fact, it is said of the practice of giving—which technically speaking refers to the thought of giving—that if we could produce and increase a strong thought of giving, then it would become almost natural for us to benefit others whenever there is need and in whatever way we can from our side.

So what is this meditation practice? In a sense, it is a bit like training our mind to get used to the thought of giving and of sympathy towards others. In other words, what we do in meditation is a bit like rehearsing our mind with this thought of giving and taking in the sense of giving happiness and eliminating suffering. If we do well in the meditation, then later on we will be able to integrate giving and taking into our actions and thereby benefit others directly. In the meditation we are only benefiting others indirectly. We need to practise meditation to train the mind so that it is more generous, compassionate and caring for other beings, rather than being concerned only and always about ourselves.

Sometime to open our heart we only have to observe the situation other beings are in to feel sympathy and love for them. It is quite natural for us to feel sorry when we see any beings in terribly miserable situations. For instance, if we go to a very poor country we can feel sorry for the people living there. The moment we arrive at the airport the miserable living conditions are very obvious. Such experiences cannot only induce compassion within us but also help us to understand our situation better. It makes us think how lucky and fortunate we are to live in a country free from troubles and which offers comfortable living conditions.

Moreover, meditation practice is also to counteract all deluded views, which mislead us from doing the most constructive actions. Take for an instance, our worldly view on the practice of giving which is completely contradictory from the viewpoint of the spiritual

teachings on the practice of giving. We tend to see miserliness—which is the opposite to giving—as the cause of increasing wealth rather than the practice of giving as being the cause of increasing wealth. Our view is based on face value, because it actually seems that when we give some things away this means that leaves less for ourselves. On the contrary, it also seems that being stingy and possessive is the way to make our wealth long-lasting and increasing. However, the spiritual teachings tell us that the result of giving is prosperity. Accordingly, rich people are rich because of their practice of giving in the past. In some way, by observing those who live for others as philanthropists, we can understand the power of love and giving in increasing wealth and getting everything you want almost without any effort. Such people command respect and devotion from others, so much so that all others are prepared to give and do anything they want. This, we can say, is a consequence of the power of love and compassion shown to others.

In terms of practice, not only should we engage in this meditation to train our mind in giving and taking or in love and compassion; at the same time, as much as possible, we should try to directly benefit others whenever there are opportunities. However, if you are not in a position to directly benefit others, as said before try to indirectly benefit others by engaging in this meditation practice. This is also very beneficial and effective in developing the capacity within us to benefit other beings. As we progress along this meditation eventually we will be in a position to directly benefit others in whatever way we can.

In practice, the other beings to whom we should mainly try to extend our love and support are those with whom we interact or live. So, as much as possible, we should generate love and compassion and the thought of how and what we can do to benefit them. If we cannot benefit others, we should prevent any harmful actions which is also in a way contributing to some sort of peace to their minds. Of course, as we are not a perfect being sometimes we create negative actions and hurt other beings. Even so, it is important not to give up our practice to develop love and compassion.

We should also try to see in our daily life that the most important spiritual practice is to always be aware of, and to check, our mind and mental attitude. We have to see that the state of mind we possess within is like our life companion. If that companion (of the mind) is something very positive, reliable, non-deceptive, and sees the right direction, then from it your life derives tremendous benefits. If the state of mind within us most of the time is very calm and peaceful, this means we are also very stable, calm, and joyous. In this way, try to sustain a state of mind which ensures peace and happiness in life while getting rid of one that brings worries, and problems.

We'll leave the teaching here and now we'll chant the Buddha's mantra as usual. Again, try to sit in the meditation posture, making sure every part of your body is relaxed. After this, generate a very peaceful and calm state of mind. As you chant the mantra just focus and

direct the mind on it.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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