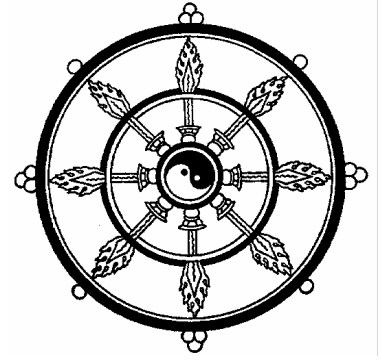


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

འདྲེན་སྤྱོད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



11 October 2000

First, we'll do a few minutes breathing meditation together. Choose a suitable posture, trying to fully relax your body.

At the same time, we must also ensure we have the correct frame of mind. If the mind is not in the correct frame, we should correct it, because meditation is about training the mind to be more disciplined.

The reason we need to control the mind is that otherwise it would be under the influence of distracting thoughts. When such thoughts occupy the mind, we find ourselves experiencing disturbance within the mind. Therefore, as we engage in the meditation practice, right from the beginning, we need to get a grip on the mind, rather than let it be overpowered by outwardly directed thoughts.

As said before, meditation practice is about gaining control over the mind. The first thing we do in the meditation, therefore, is to try and remove all distracting thoughts, and let the mind settle inwards.

By making an effort, we can get rid of all distracting thoughts and bring the mind inward. However, if we do not continue to impose further discipline on the mind, it will simply go outwards again and be distracted by external objects. Therefore, we have to tie the mind to our in-breath and out-breath. After bringing the mind inward, to prevent it from being drawn outside uncontrollably, we direct it on the in-breath and out-breath.

We'll do this breathing meditation for a short time. (*Pause for meditation.*)

Now we will continue the teaching on the thought transformation text, *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*. Verse 100 reads:

Then for even the sake of but one sentient being
May we gladly take birth in the three lower states
With enlightening conduct that never grows weak
May we lead all the beings in miserable rebirths
Out of their sufferings and causes for pain.

This verse is concerned with training ourselves in generating the Bodhisattva spirit - universal love and compassion for all other beings. This universal love and compassion possessed by Bodhisattvas is the energy that drives all their mental, verbal or bodily actions - all their actions are dedicated to benefiting other beings. Bodhisattvas are able to continuously benefit other beings, whenever and wherever they see need, because their minds are enriched with this love and compassion

in its strongest, most powerful form.

On the other hand, ordinary beings are not able to benefit others - even if they see some need and even if they have the capability - because inwardly they lack the power of love and compassion for other beings.

Therefore, when we are able to generate love and compassion and cultivate a strong, good heart, it will become natural for us to always respond to the needs of others. With that power, one is actually driven to always benefit others, whenever there is a need.

Take, for example, parents who love and care about their children so much that if they confront a situation where any of their children - whether a son or daughter - is caught in a fire, they will put their own life at stake to rescue the child. They are able to put the need of their child first because of their love and compassion for the child.

Earlier on in the text, we talked about the Bodhisattvas and about training in the Bodhisattvas' deeds for the benefit of other beings. These deeds include learning the teachings and practice of the meditation of 'giving and taking', and are all directed to the benefit of other beings.

What the text is saying here is that the success of our practice of benefiting other beings depends on this Bodhisattva spirit, our good heart. When we engage in the practice of benefiting other beings, it's most important not to lose that good heart, and not to be discouraged from thinking and acting to benefit other beings.

We can also relate this teaching to achieving success in our day to day life. Whatever goals we pursue in life, achieving the end result of our actions depend on our motivation, our courage, and our determination. It's important to maintain our determination and our courage until we achieve our goals.

If we relate this to our own practice, even if we feel it is not perfect, we all have some degree of love and compassion and a sense of care and consideration for other beings. When we study the deeds or practices of the Bodhisattvas - the superior or noble beings who completely devote their lives to benefiting other beings - we should feel inspired to follow in their footsteps.

It is on the basis of the Bodhisattvas' practice of good heart and love and compassion towards other beings that they eventually complete the path to complete enlightenment, the state of Buddhahood. In this perfect

state, all faults have been removed and one is endowed with all the excellent qualities.

When we talk about a loving and compassionate mind, we are talking about the attitude we show to others, like wanting to bring them some happiness, or wanting to help them through some problem or misery they are facing. First of all, we need to understand the advantages for ourselves of developing this thought of benefiting other beings, and of showing love and care for them.

One benefit is that anyone who shows genuine love and compassion to others is generally regarded as being a good-natured, kind-hearted person. Such a person not only brings love and happiness to other people, but she or he also finds stable peace and happiness in her or his own life. Wherever that person finds himself or herself, he or she will find lasting peace, happiness. And whomever that person accompanies, there will always be harmony in their relationships.

Cultivating love and compassion has the potential to bring lasting peace and happiness to ourselves and to other beings. But in terms of putting this teaching into practice, where do we start? We start this practice by trying to perfect and develop further the love and the compassion we already possess for other beings – your parents, or your children, or your partner, or friend, or whoever. We must also try to maintain that love and compassion, rather than losing it later on.

The reason why we are not able to sustain our practice of developing love and compassion is that our practice of love and compassion has not been stable in the past. This is reflected in our relationships.

We are always changing our relationships. There may be someone you once considered to be a friend and had some close feeling for. But sooner or later you changed your mind, and then came to hold hatred for that same person. So even if we do possess some compassion, it is not consistent, and therefore we cannot make progress.

Nevertheless, we need to focus on perfecting and developing this love and compassion because all the problems we confront in our relationship with others are the result of letting our love and compassion degenerate. Problems arise when we begin to show hatred and hostility to others.

So if we consider the immediate benefits of cultivating love and compassion for others – in terms of resolving whatever problems we face, and of achieving the ultimate goal of complete enlightenment – we should see how indispensable it is for us. Our focus here is to realise that if we try to develop love and compassion towards others, it will benefit not only others but ourselves as well.

Most people realise that generating love and compassion for others is a worthy cause, a positive thing to do. But it is important for us to see why it is positive, to gain some conviction about why it is beneficial, and to identify the quality of love and compassion within one's own mind.

After giving this general introduction to this verse's

meaning, we will now discuss what the actual verse is saying. The verse is saying that the Bodhisattvas' determination and thought of benefiting other beings is so strong that they take delight in benefiting just one single being, even if it means taking rebirth in one of the three lower states of suffering existence.

As ordinary beings, we love to visit places with a beautiful landscape and environment, with flowers, lakes, and so on. However, the Bodhisattvas, when they see some way of benefiting other beings, will see even the most miserable existence as a joyful place that offers delight and pleasure. The difference between Bodhisattvas and ordinary being is their mental attitude. For ordinary beings, the most important thing is the self or the "I". It is the centre of their world, and they strongly cherish that "I".

On the other hand, a Bodhisattva cherishes other beings as intensely as we cherish this "I", or ego. With the strong thought of cherishing other beings, Bodhisattvas then engage in actions that benefit other beings, such as the practice of giving, morality, patience, joyous effort, and so forth. Due to the intensity of their motivation to benefit other beings, they never tire of engaging in their selfless deeds. Rather, they take great joy in engaging in those deeds.

We need to understand that the source of all the Bodhisattvas' deeds, all their actions to benefit all other beings, is the Bodhisattva aspiration to be of benefit. So to engage in the training of the Bodhisattvas' deeds, one has to generate a very strong form of love, compassion, and a strong aspiration to benefit other beings.

Even when people train to go into the army, as part of their training they have to show bravery and be courageous. Likewise, we have to realise that the source of all the energy for us to be able to engage in actions to benefit all other beings is in the mind – training the mind to fully develop love and compassion for others.

We will stop the teaching here. As usual, we will chant the Buddha's mantra seven times. Could we again sit in the meditation posture, feeling very comfortable and relaxed, and try to remove all distracting thoughts, feeling the mind to be peaceful and calm. Then, as we begin the chanting, we should focus the mind on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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