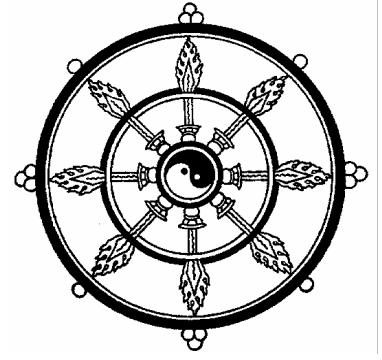


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

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As usual, we will do some meditation first. Make yourself comfortable in the sitting posture, ensuring that your body is fully relaxed.

It's important that we also rest our mind, ensuring that it is clear, stable and not influenced by distracting thoughts. Meditation practice is the practice of training your mind to remain on a given object, without falling under the influence of outer distractions.

The literal translation of the Tibetan word for meditation (*gom*) is 'to get used to', which means getting our mind used to sitting with a given object. So, when we engage in meditation practice, after first choosing the right posture, the next thing we do is stabilise the mind inward by attempting to remove all outgoing thoughts.

After bringing the mind inward, one should try to let the mind rest within for a while. Immediately after that, one should begin whatever meditation practice one has chosen. Here, we are doing the breathing meditation, directing our mind on the in-breath and out-breath and trying to keep our mental focus there, making an effort to prevent the mind from drifting towards external objects of distraction. [Pause for meditation.]

Now we will return to the commentary on *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*. Verse 103 reads:

Then may all sentient beings of the three higher rebirths

Perfect meditation on egolessness.

In this way may they realise the non-self-existence
Of worldly involvement and freedom as well.

May they place concentration on both of these
equally,

Seeing their natures as equally void.

This verse is like a prayer by the author of this text, the great master Dharmarakshita. In the preceding verses, we studied another prayer by the author (Dharmarakshita), which was the prayer of the great Bodhisattvas. This effectively requested "May all sentient beings born in the lower realms eventually to reach the complete state of enlightenment".

In this verse, the author is not only praying for beings in lower rebirths, but also for sentient beings who are reborn in the higher realms. This prayer requests that may those enjoying the highest rebirths within cyclic existence also find the perfect way to reach the godly state of enlightenment by realising selflessness, which is the ultimate nature of all things; may they realise selflessness of the happiness of samsaric worldly existence, which is the peace of nirvana or liberation.

Nirvana peace is the state of having pacified afflictive obstructions – obstructions to liberation from samsara and obstructions to the omniscient state of Buddhahood.

To comprehend the meaning of this verse, we need to know about the two levels of understanding. The first level is the way things are perceived by Bodhisattvas great noble beings, such as Dharmarakshita, the author of this text. We must look at what mental attitude they adopt towards all other sentient beings.

The Bodhisattva's attitude towards all other beings is completely opposite to the one we ordinary beings possess. These great beings always hold the strong thought of cherishing other beings – there is no self-cherishing whatsoever. They completely disregard the welfare of the self. In contrast, we strongly cherish the self and make it our focus. In other words, the minds of these noble beings are directed towards the welfare of all other beings. They see no difference between themselves and all other beings. Bodhisattvas see that we are all the same in terms of what we do and do not want.

The great noble beings have also developed a state of what we call equanimity in their attitude towards other beings. They see all other beings without any discrimination – all are equally important to them, whether they are enemies or strangers, they all are same. They have cultivated what we call the bodhicitta mind, which is the altruistic mind that has a sense of universal love and compassion and care towards all other beings.

Bodhisattvas also have the wisdom that realises selflessness and they see all phenomena – whether pleasant or unpleasant, desirable or undesirable – in this way. They see that the way all things exist is the same, nothing exists from its own side. All things depend on other phenomena and other conditions for their existence.

In this verse we find the prayer: "May all other sentient beings develop the same qualities of great compassion and great wisdom, the wisdom of realising the ultimate truth of selfless existence". Gaining this realisation is very beneficial. The wisdom of selflessness affects the way we view everything. When our views change, it affects the way we experience things and the emotions that we continuously generate.

Normally, we view things without any understanding of the mind and of how we perceive things deep within our consciousness. If we look closely, the way we view things is usually affected by some sort of ignorance. Deep down we view things as having some sort of inherent self-existence. For example, when we generate desire, we

perceive something as being inherently appealing and beautiful. Similarly, when we generate hatred or anger, we perceive something as inherently being unpleasant and undesirable.

However, the qualities and beauty of the desirable object for which we have intense or overwhelming desire are merely projections or exaggerations of our mind. Due to this deep seated ignorance within us, our mind is prone to fabricating the nature of reality. Whatever object we perceive, even if it is only mildly attractive, our mind can see that object as totally beautiful – from every aspect, it looks attractive and appealing. Thus, our desire becomes intense and overwhelming.

Likewise, if you also examine any unpleasant object confronting you, no matter how mildly discomforting it may be, the mind can perceive it as an object of deep hatred, in every respect. If that unpleasant object is a person, then we will regard that person as having no virtue whatsoever. Consequently, we experience strong anger and hatred. Such an experience of strong desire or hatred, can be a tremendous source of pain and suffering. But we can relate that suffering back to our own mind, the way it exaggerated our perception of the object.

If we investigate further where this desire or hatred came from, we can see that it is derived from our wrong view, all our misconceptions about the nature of the perceived object. Our mind perceives the object as if it exists independently, and does not depend on any other cause or condition. If it is pleasant or desirable, we perceive that object as being inherently desirable, rather than its 'desirability' having something to do with our individual perspective. Our mind sees that desirable quality as something inherent in the object. In reality, the object doesn't exist in the way we perceive it to exist.

This misconception about the way things exist is the ultimate cause that gives rise to all our wrong ways of seeing things, all the thoughts that continuously superimpose a mistaken view on the way things really exist.

If we want to understand how our mind fundamentally perceives things, we have to check our experience of the deep down sense of "I". We all have a subconscious sense of "I" which not only wrongly perceives all other phenomena, it even wrongly perceives the way our own self exists. The way we perceive our "I" or self is also tainted by this profound wrong view, because we regard this "I" as having an independent, inherent existence. Likewise, our mind perceives everything as existing inherently, from its own side. If something is beautiful to us, we see the quality of beauty as something real and concrete from the side of the object. If something is unpleasant to our mind, we see it as being inherently, objectively like that. Whether it is beautiful or ugly, the object appears to our mind to be established or to exist objectively.

However, if instead of this view we gain the wisdom that realises the selflessness or emptiness of inherent existence of all objects, then instead of seeing things as existing from their own side, we will see their existence

as a mere collection of various causes and conditions. Therefore, things appear to our mind as just that – a mere appearance – and do not reflect the actual nature of reality. If we could gain such wisdom, we would be able to remove this veil of misconception and delusions that exists in our mind.

As long as we have this strong sense of "I" or ego, we cannot prevent thoughts of liking or disliking, and so on. To gain the wisdom of realising selflessness, the ultimate truth, we have to examine this deep down sense of "I". Through this examination, we should try to overcome this view of an inherent self, of the "I" existing inherently and independently of any other cause or condition.

As well as trying to develop this wisdom, we should also try to cultivate loving kindness and altruism or compassion towards other beings. We should try to see that all other beings are the same as ourselves in that they all want happiness and do not want suffering. We often talk about human or animal rights, or equality and so on. But in order to enjoy these rights, we have to understand that we are all the same – we are all sentient beings sharing this existence, we do not exist separately or independently. We should try to see those beings who are close to us as being the same as oneself, as an integral part of one's life. What they experience is your experience. If they experience happiness, you feel happy and good about that. And if they experience unhappiness or suffering, you don't neglect them, but rather try to see their experience as like your own experience.

This attitude of seeing other beings as no different to oneself can be very beneficial for us, in terms of developing better relationships and bringing harmony in our relationships with others. It also prevents much unnecessary suffering in our life. Sometimes our attitude to other beings is so disgustingly inhuman that we are happy to observe them suffer but unhappy to observe them being happy. If we think about it, having such an attitude towards other beings in fact is a source of suffering for us in our own life.

So, as much as possible, along cultivating wisdom, try to also cultivate the right mental attitude of love, of a good heart, respecting other beings as you respect your own self.

We'll leave tonight's teaching here. Now we'll chant the Buddha's mantra seven times. As we did earlier in the session, we will sit in meditation posture and as much as possible try to relax our body, and settle the mind inward by overcoming all distracting thoughts. Having done this, as we chant we try to focus the mind on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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