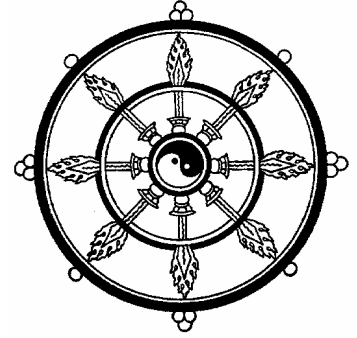


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

འཇིགས་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



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We will begin with a few minutes breathing meditation. Adopt a suitable sitting posture and make yourself completely comfortable.

The aim of doing meditation practice is to achieve a calm mind and to understand our mind so that we can realise our full potential. When we engage in meditation practice, it is not enough to try to physically find a few moments of peace and rest. It is most important that we also try to examine our mind, and make sure it is not disturbed by distracting thoughts. When we get rid of all distracting thoughts, our mind will remain peaceful, which will give it more power to concentrate and think clearly. This will help us realise our full potential. It will allow us to develop more confidence in ourselves and see the potential within us to achieve anything we want to achieve.

Whenever we engage in meditation practice, we should try as much as possible to focus on the mind, and make an effort to bring it under our control, rather than let it be controlled by unruly or distracting thoughts. When distracting thoughts control the mind, it seems to have little potential or power. However, if we free the mind from the control of distracting thoughts, it will settle fully within, enabling us to discover its full potential.

Before you undertake this breathing meditation, make sure that you adopt the sitting position that is most relaxing for your body. Then, direct your attention to the mind, checking to see whether it is distracted by outer objects. If it is, then you should try to remove any outer distractions from the mind and make sure that it is fully stabilised within.

Having done this, we can begin the actual breathing meditation, simply focusing the mind on the in-breath and out-breath, remaining fully aware of the breath coming in and out. (Pause for meditation.)

We will continue the commentary on the mind-training text, *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*. We started discussing verse 103 last week but did not finish the discussion. The last two lines of that verse read (refer the first two lines of the next verse, verse 104), say:

If we practise these methods we shall soon overcome

Our true enemies: selfish concern and self-love.

These lines are saying that the main enemies we must overcome are the self-cherishing mind and the wrong view of self-grasping. The means of overcoming these two enemies are the two types of bodhi mind or bodhicitta – the conventional bodhi mind and the ultimate bodhi mind.

The lines advise us to identify this self-cherishing mind within us, as well as the problems that this mind brings to our lives. We also need to identify the mind that cherishes the welfare of other beings, and the benefits we can derive from generating that mind.

To identify the self-cherishing mind, we have to identify the strong sense of ego and "I", which we will find deep within us. If we check carefully, we can see that this strong, underlying sense of "I" or ego has a big influence on our lives, even the way we view the world and our sense of discrimination. In fact, we will realise that we are continuously driven by that

instinct – all of our views are based on it. The reason why, deep inside us, we each regard our own "I" to be more significant and important than other beings is due to our strong, unconscious grasping to this ego or "I".

We can relate much of the conflict we experience in our lives to this deep down sense of "I" or self-cherishing, even to the extent that the only things acceptable to us are the things that appear as being acceptable to this "I".

When we talk about our spiritual path, for example, we may have a strong negative feeling about some good spiritual advice that we have received from a teacher. If we are not able to accept this good advice, it's because that advice does not accord with our "I", or self-centred mind. In a similar way, a good parent may try to advise and help their children. But, no matter good the advice is, the children may just ignore it, and not see it as beneficial to their lives. This is due to the conflicting view of their "I" or self-centred mind.

This deeply ingrained self-centred mind is what also makes us see ourselves as a being without any faults. Deep down, we are not prepared to accept any criticism from others, or that we may have any faults: deep down, we see ourselves as perfect. With such an attitude, however, it is impossible for us to practise patience and tolerance.

While we must try to see how our life is controlled by this self-cherishing mind, at the same time we need to also understand that other beings are in the same situation. Their interactions with us are also controlled by the self-centred mind deep within them.

When we harbour a self-centred mind, it is hard to bring any harmony to our relationships with other beings, and difficult to resolve any differences between them and us. The self-centred mind is always destroying the things we cherish. For instance, we all cherish having good relationships with other beings because, to a large extent, our happiness depends on them. But this self-cherishing mind can cause beings who have been friendly to us and fond of us to become our enemies. Further, it can make others who already dislike us to dislike us even more.

Thus, we can see that, as long as we have this self-cherishing mind or strong sense of ego within us, no matter what we achieve – even if we are successful in finding better living conditions – we will find that, despite our success and good conditions, we still feel unhappy and dissatisfied, as if something is missing and our minds are not fulfilled. Deep down there is a sense of emptiness, discomfort, and heaviness.

Even if we are enjoying good conditions right at this moment, enjoying some inner peace, happiness, and stability, we will see that it is in fact quite fragile. If we look closely, we can see that it won't take much for us to lose even this limited peace and happiness. With this self-cherishing mind within us, we are so volatile that even if we don't face any problems or conflict in our mind at the moment, problems could still manifest at any time.

The self-cherishing mind influences our actions. If an action is completely motivated by the self-cherishing mind, it will have

negative consequences. Even if we tell ourselves that we are doing the action to benefit ourselves or others, that action (motivated by the self-cherishing mind) will actually become a source of future problems.

We need to examine the benefits of reducing the intensity of this self-cherishing mind, and of cultivating instead the mind of cherishing other beings, the mind that is sincerely concerned about other beings' needs. The reason why we need to consider and sincerely respect the needs of other beings is not just because it will benefit them; we also will benefit and achieve everything we want to achieve. Even the experience of cultivating a feeling of love towards other beings, and showing some care and concern for them can make us immediately feel peaceful.

Although these teachings are about cultivating genuine love and compassion for all sentient beings, in practice, we have to first cultivate perfect love and compassion for those close to us, those with whom we are intimate. The degree of effort we put into showing genuine love and care for other beings and their needs – even to the extent of forsaking our own needs and pleasures so that we can benefit them – depends on us knowing the reason for doing this practice. The reason is simply that if we show more concern for other beings by trying to have a less selfish mind, this will bring us more joy and happiness, and fulfil all our wishes.

If we made a list of what we desire, it might include having a lot of friends around us. We want everyone, especially those who are close to us – such as our parents, relatives, partner, and friends – to enjoy a good relationship with us.

However, even though our day to day thinking based on the self-cherishing mind appears to be protecting our interest and needs, in fact every action we do will become destructive and bring results that are contrary to our wishes.

Say we find ourselves facing continual conflict – with a friend, family, parents, or our children. No matter what we do, we cannot find a resolution to the conflict. We may try all kinds of different methods, but no single one actually works. But if you take a close look, the real fight is not between oneself and others; rather, it is a fight between the self-cherishing mind within us and the self-cherishing mind within the other beings. You could say that you are really caught up in a fight between the two self-cherishing minds.

Other beings are important to us. However, with the self-cherishing mind, we do not even want to admit that our parents or our children are that important to our lives, in terms of being a source of joy to us. But if we examine this situation more broadly, the major causes of all our society's problems are rooted in disharmony and bad relationships between parents, children, or relatives. No matter how we may view our parents or children, our bond with our parents and other relatives is fixed. No matter what state your relationship is in with your parents or children, in your mind you must still think of them as being your parent or child. As social beings living within a community, the parent-child relationship and any relationship between relatives is very important.

Because of early problems with their parents, some people may even sever the relationship completely. They may not speak to them for many, many years. However, during that time, in the mind of the child and of the parent, there will be a deep sense of hurt. It will in fact affect their whole life. Even after many years of living apart, whenever other people ask you about your parents or your children, you are not sure how to reply. It is not just that you don't have an answer – you also feel hurt and bad.

With other types of relationship, such as being together with someone as a partner, you may finish the relationship and live separate lives and, over a period of time, completely forgot about it. You may never give it another thought.

The message here is that to forge good, friendly and open relationships with beings who are close to us, whether that may be parent to child or child to parent or some other close relationship, one must try to practise showing love, compassion and patience. The teachings advise us to cultivate universal love and compassion for all sentient beings. If we examine our mind, we can see that we do have the potential to produce that extensive level of love and compassion. But, in order to develop our love and compassion to that extensive level, we have to first perfect these qualities towards those few beings with whom we already have some special relationship that is important to our happiness and stability.

Children should try as much as possible to respect their parents, even if the parents say something negative or unreasonable. Usually, the child will immediately respond with some negative retort, which really the response of the child's self-cherishing mind. This will develop into a destructive fight that just goes nowhere. But if you try to practise patience, you will see that after a while your father or mother realise that you have been patient with them. They will realise that, even if they did say something bad to you, you didn't respond in the same way. This realisation will bring tremendous pleasure and joy to their mind, and their attitude towards you will become very positive.

When we talk about helping other beings, it is not just our material contributions to society that will make other people or our children like us. There is more to it than that. The real difference we can make is in the way we live our life, sustaining good relationships at least with those who are close to us. If we all did this, then nobody would feel isolated, rejected, unloved, or uncared for. From the parents' side, having a close relationship with their children is an important source of happiness, without which they would find their life to be lacking.

In this materially developed country, there are many cases of parents who are very wealthy, but the only people who come to see them are a few friends who are virtual strangers, people they may only have known for a short time. Their children never go to see them. From the children's side, their parents' wealth does not automatically win their love.

The message here is that, before we can produce universal love and compassion, we have to try as much as possible to show compassion for those close to us. It is from there that we can make progress.

That's all for tonight's teaching. As usual, we will chant the Buddha's mantra seven times. Could people again sit in meditation posture, and calm the mind. Then, as we chant the mantra, try to focus the mind on it.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

*Transcribed from the tapes by Gabrielle Thomson
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Edited Version*

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