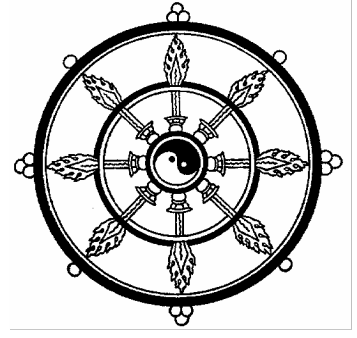


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

འདྲེན་སྐྱོད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



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We'll begin tonight with doing a short breathing meditation together, first. Choose a sitting posture which is most convenient for sitting and for relaxing for your body. We discipline ourselves in this meditation posture in order to undertake various actions. Whether our actions are going to be something very beneficial, meaningful, fruitful or not is mainly dependent upon the type of the mind with which we undertake any action. In other words it is the *motivation* with which we begin the action which determines the quality of our actions. Therefore, the motivation with which we should try to undertake this meditation practice is to cultivate the thought of achieving peace and happiness for all other sentient beings, and the thought of freeing them from any suffering. With this motivation, we should think we are engaging in this meditation practice which is primarily to calm our mind and to enhance peace and happiness within our mind. Through achieving this inner peace and happiness, we are also trying to achieve peace and happiness for all other sentient beings.

We should begin the actual meditation by first fully bringing the mind inward. In doing this, we have to make a very genuine and sincere effort to try to remove all outer distractions. If there's any thoughts of external objects, try to cease all such thoughts and just experience the mind fully resting inward. Having done this, we then begin this breathing meditation focusing the mind on the incoming and outgoing breath, as single-pointedly as possible, not letting any other object or thought distract the mind from this focus on the breath. Continue to do this breathing meditation, focusing on the in-breath and out-breath. Then, at a point when progress is made in terms of being able to retain focus on the breath for a little while, then we can visualise when breathing that all our mental delusions like desire, hatred and ignorance or any physical illness or cause of any illness are breathed out in the form of black smoke. Then with the incoming breath, imagine that in the form of very bright light we receive the special blessings and very positive energies of all enlightened beings, like the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas. These blessings and energies then fully fill our mind and body, transforming the body into the nature of light. In addition to this visualisation, we can imagine this light as the size of a tiny bird's egg, which in reality is our own mind, and then try to use that as a focus for the mind. Imagine this ball of light at the heart, and then focus the mind on that. We'll just do the meditation as described for a few minutes.

Pause for meditation

Now you can arise from your meditation. When just before we were talking about the type of motivation we should cultivate before engaging in any special practice, or for that matter, before undertaking any actions, we said that we should generate the genuine wish for all other sentient beings to have happiness and to be free from all forms of suffering and misery. In order to achieve that goal of benefiting other sentient beings, we are engaging in this meditation practice. Even though the practice is to calm our own mind, our motivation indicates the cultivation of compassion, because compassion is the thought or wish: *may all other sentient beings*

be free from suffering. This motivation also indicates genuine love, which is the wish for all other sentient beings to possess happiness. In this way, even if in our motivation we say that we are doing this practice to calm our mind, to control ourselves or to transform our own mind and actions, the main aim of doing this practice it is to benefit other sentient beings. Therefore we say our motivation is also the motivation of the Bodhicitta mind, which is the aspiration to achieve the complete state of enlightenment for the sake of all others.

When we understand the true meaning of love and compassion, then we can realise that we do not possess it (love and compassion)—even though we say to others that we love them, care about them and feel sympathy towards them. If we investigate and have a close look at this, usually the feeling we show to others—which we call love—is in fact influenced by our own self-interest. We love them because there is something in them which is attractive to our mind, something beneficial to us. Even if there may be some element of true love and compassion towards them, if we check, we may find that there's more an element of what we call 'desire' or attachment. It is important when we try to engage in meditation practice that we make a genuine and concerted effort to try to not only understand the meaning of true love and compassion, but also to try to cultivate that in our mind, and to develop this true, genuine love and compassion towards other beings. It is also beneficial, having cultivated such genuine love and compassion within us, to try to use this as our motivation—like a driving force behind any actions we undertake in our daily lives. Not only meditation or spiritual actions, even in other actions, if we use that love and compassion as a driving force, then it is said that our actions will be something truly beneficial to other beings.

In our daily life, the most beneficial practice would be as much as possible to cultivate this love and compassion towards other beings. This practice can then fulfill everything we cherish in our life, and also things cherished or desired by any other beings. If we talk about this benefit of cultivating love and compassion, it is this practice of love and compassion that is the most essential practice, because it is the essence of all the teachings given by the Buddha. If we understand the benefit of this fully, then we can say that it is also the true source of all the happiness you wish for, and it is the true cause to eliminate all the suffering and causes of sufferings in one's life. Just as there is no doubt that we all wish ourselves to be a very good-natured person, similarly, we also want our life to be very happy and peaceful. Likewise, if we consider any other beings, they also have the wish to be a good-natured human. Just as you do, they also wish to live a very happy life. Cultivating this love and compassion, is the cause and source of this bringing happiness to our life and the life of other beings. If we develop this love and compassion, then we naturally or automatically will find more peace and happiness in our life, as well as less harm, fear, and worries. When we develop this love and compassion within our mind as we discussed before—this genuine feeling of love and compassion towards other beings—it is so natural that there will be harmony in our relationships with other people, whether you live with one

person or you are living in a community, there will be harmony in that community. And having cultivated love and compassion within, one can actually feel there is the capacity within to actually do something to benefit other beings. With love, comes all true friendships and trust from the other beings and you receive all the admiration and appreciation from others.

We say that love and compassion is also a form of dharma practice. Dharma practice means the practice which can prevent us from wrong actions, and no matter what, from directing our actions from the wrong path to the right path. From this point of view, when we cultivate love and also compassion, we bring or direct our mind from harmfulness to non-harmfulness. This is dharma practice. In other words, it brings some transformation within our mind. In this way, we can see that with love and compassion within us we do not hold any harmful thoughts towards others. We only show this beneficial thought and attitude towards others. The response from others is therefore naturally a source of something very beneficial to oneself. Conversely, if instead of showing love and compassion we show harm to others, the outcome is that we receive harm back. We also lose the faith or the trust of others.

If we say that the practice of dharma is a true object of refuge and protection, then it is to be understood in the context of our own mind. If we cultivate dharma, practice dharma wholeheartedly, this can save us from many unnecessary problems, and can bring a lot of happiness or benefit to our life. We have to try to understand that the benefit of love and compassion, in terms of practice, is something which comes from the depths of our heart. Love and compassion is not something we normally show to others. The way we express love and compassion is more often physical—when we hug someone we supposedly show a lot of love and compassion, but in fact it is most important that it comes from the depths of our heart. When it is expressed from the heart, we receive the same response from others. They can truly feel our love and compassion, and as a result they feel positive—that it's pleasant to be with you. On the contrary when we are around someone who holds hatred, ill-feelings and hostility, we feel insecure and mentally we even feel some fear. In opposition, when others we are close to hold true love and compassion, this can have the effect of creating a true atmosphere of peace, tranquility and happiness.

It is important that we understand the meaning of dharma clearly, especially those of us who consider ourselves followers of spiritual practice, of dharma. Dharma is a quality which has to be cultivated in our mind. It's something we have to practice, to effect some change or transformation in our mind. It's important to make an effort to live up to this true meaning of dharma in practice. By setting a good example we can then naturally inspire others to follow dharma. You can see how when we talk of benefiting others, it has to start from first calming ourselves, transforming our own thoughts and deeds into something very positive. Through this we can then reach out to benefit others.

The benefit of this love and compassion we are talking about, which is something immediate to our own life and to those who are close to us, is not like the love and compassion we feel when we think of benefiting people in a distant land. Rather it is those immediate to us who are the recipients of our love and compassion. Whether you are a parent, married, single or whatever, when you practice this your family, children or your partner get the immediate benefit of your spiritual practice. Even in the case of family problems and crises—like problems being experienced by children—there is proof that this is often related or connected to problems being experienced by the parents, like conflict in their relationship. This has an effect on

the children and on their minds. Basically, without filling our mind with some amount of love and compassion for others, then it is very difficult to find happiness or satisfaction in our own life. Without some understanding of the needs of others, and without caring for their needs, our whole attitude will be completely self-centred. We will think only of our own benefit. With that attitude, we won't hesitate to cause problems for others. Even for the sake of some minor benefit, we can create problems for others to such an extent that if we face the same problem we find them impossible to bear ourselves. Without some feeling of love and compassion towards others, it is so easy to cause others to suffer, to disturb their mind. Even as just one person you can cause problems for many others, spoiling their day and their enjoyment. Even as a spiritual practitioner, if you're not careful your actions can cause others to generate wrong views towards dharma and can cause them to turn away from the dharma, and to suffer and be unhappy.

We should try to understand that whether we know a lot about the dharma or not, or whether we have tried various form of practice or not, the most essential dharma practice is to physically cultivate love and compassion. Especially as practitioners, we have to always think that when we give some time to spiritual practice, then we have to make sure we're not doing the opposite—creating negative, karmic actions. In short, as much as possible, we should try to train our mind to cultivate love and compassion toward others. This is the most essential part of dharma practice. Even though there are so many different types of practice, meditations and things to learn, the key thing to practice is love and compassion. Without this, it's like we try a bit of this and a bit of that and by doing the same things over a period of time we then develop some very bad habits in our spiritual practice and do not make any progress or gain any benefits. On a daily basis, the first thing we should do when we get up in the mornings is to try to cultivate this love and compassion towards all others. Even if it's not something genuine—if it's very superficial—it is also beneficial to think: *May all beings have happiness and may they all be free from suffering.* Try to develop and cultivate such a thought. And try to also generate the motivation throughout the day, that whatever actions you do may not cause harm to others but rather be a cause to benefit them and free them from suffering. If it is impossible to cultivate the genuine motivation—even if the superficial thought is not possible—then even just saying the word 'love' to others also brings benefit to others. When you hold your partner or others and just say this word 'love', even a dry word can bring such pleasure and joy to others. Imagine what genuine love and compassion generated from the depth of your heart could do.

So now we just finish with the chanting of the Buddha's mantra for seven times. While chanting this mantra, again sit in the meditation posture then making sure that there is no outer distraction in your mind. As we chant the mantra make sure that the mind is focused on it.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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