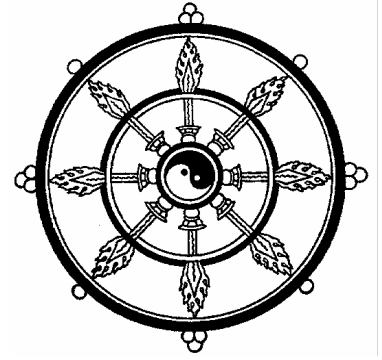


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

འཇིགས་མེད་མཚོ་ཆེན་པོ་འཕྲིན་ལོ་།



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First we shall do some breathing meditation. Begin by adopting a suitable meditation posture, making sure you feel comfortable and fully relaxed.

Try to understand that the reason we practice meditation is to make our mind function better. As well as achieving single-pointed concentration, through meditation we are also able to find more clarity and inner stability. If we ask ourselves if all these qualities are present within our minds right now, we will find that obviously they are not. So what are the main obstacles to us possessing all the above mentioned qualities?

The main obstacles are disturbing thoughts or a very strong, uncontrolled state of mind. We lack these qualities because this disturbing state of mind predominates - our mind is overpowered by this uncontrolled state of mind. Therefore, recognise that the purpose of meditation is to challenge this uncontrolled state of mind and to gain control over it, rather than let it control you.

Before we engage in this meditation practice it is important to generate the strong intention to bring the mind completely under our control. We should aim to stop even an instant of distracting thought from influencing our mind.

Having cultivated this motivation, try not to rush in forcefully. In a very gentle and gradual way, try to let go of all distracting thoughts of external objects so that your mind remains fully within. After this, try to gently direct the mind onto the incoming and outgoing breath, as single-pointedly as possible, not allowing any other distraction to arise.

We'll now continue our discussion on the thought transformation text *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons* by the famous Master Dharmarakshita. We've just finished where the text refers to the mind as the conventional Bodhicitta mind. *This is the conventional altruistic mind of enlightenment, which is the main method employed in achieving the complete state of enlightenment.*

The next part of the text is about the ultimate Bodhicitta mind, the ultimate altruistic mind of enlightenment. This is the main wisdom to achieve the complete state of perfection called enlightenment.

Just as a bird needs two sound and completely perfect wings to be able to fly in the sky, similarly, to achieve complete enlightenment, one needs both the method (conventional Bodhicitta), as well as wisdom (ultimate Bodhicitta). To free oneself from the worldly existence known as samsara and achieve the state of liberation, one

needs both conventional and ultimate Bodhicitta, and not one without the other.

The author of this text, Dharmarakshita, had given rise to this pure conventional Bodhicitta mind. He had perfected the method side of the path to full enlightenment to such an extent that he could, if necessary, give away his own flesh for the benefit of other sentient beings. But even though he had perfectly qualified himself in the method side of the path, he still had to exert himself in achieving the wisdom realising the ultimate truth; the wisdom directly realising the ultimate truth of emptiness - which he did in fact gain.

So to realise that even if underneath we possess the full potential to achieve the complete enlightenment, to actually achieve this we have to seek both the method and the wisdom. To achieve this perfect state of enlightenment we have to fully develop the method and wisdom in the path leading to this complete enlightenment.

Generally speaking, method and wisdom are indispensable factors in achieving complete enlightenment. Complete enlightenment is a state in which you have removed all negative faults and have fully developed all possible excellent qualities. Even if we talk in terms of achieving even a mundane goal, we need to employ both method and wisdom. Not only that, the method and the wisdom employed must be the correct one. When we talk of wisdom and method here, we are mainly referring to qualities we have to generate within ourselves.

If we generate these inner qualities of method and wisdom, then we'd have a lot of spirit, determination, courage and confidence. We would have all this, and also clear knowledge of how to reach to our goal. One text says that inner knowledge can in fact be our best friend, like a butter lamp eliminating the darkness of ignorance within us. Metaphorically, if we consider the inner qualities that we develop within ourselves as 'friends', they can be excellent, most trustworthy and reliable friends. In contrast, our 'outer friends' can often be misleading and unreliable. They may not be there in times of most need when one undergoes difficulties. Quite often these outer friends leave us. On the contrary, when one enjoys a lot of goodness in life, there are more outer friends around.

We don't necessarily have to talk of this important benefit of generating and developing these inner qualities of method and wisdom, just because we consider ourselves as spiritual, religious practitioners

seeking some reward in a future life. Even if you see yourself as a non-believer, just ordinary like any other, you want to see your life as meaningful, successful and satisfying. To lead such a life, you have to see the benefit or relevance of integrating practices that enhance such inner qualities. Specifically we're talking about method and wisdom here, which we discussed briefly before.

'Method' refers to what we call 'Bodhicitta' mind, which is the altruistic mind wishing to achieve full enlightenment for the sake of all other beings. What is that mind? It is an attitude that sees the needs of other sentient beings to be more important than our own. Such an attitude of altruism is based on its root cause, which is developing loving kindness and genuine compassion for other beings. With 'wisdom' we're talking about a very special wisdom that realises emptiness. Emptiness is the ultimate truth, the ultimate reality of the way things exist. This wisdom of emptiness is said to be a direct antidote to the misconception of grasping at the inherent existence of things.

Such misconceptions of self-grasping can be further divided into two: the self-grasping of the self (of a person) and of others. The self-grasping of the person makes us wrongly perceive the way we exist. To recognise whether we possess such self-grasping, which is like being ignorant about the existence of our own self, then we have to observe and examine our deep-down feeling about the sense of 'I' we possess. This sense of 'I' is constantly within us. We have to examine how we exist as a person. If we look, we'll find a deep-down sense of 'I' as existing independently and inherently.

If we observe this 'I', we see that it's like the possessor, or 'doer' of actions. That's the way we perceive it exists.

If we also examine how other phenomena exist—for instance how we call our body 'my body'—we find that we actually have the perception that this body is possessed by the 'I'. On an experiential level, if we examine how we view this body, we can see that we perceive a very independent or inherent mode of existence. This grasping at the person and other things like the body is the root cause that binds us in this worldly, cyclic existence. This deep-down self-grasping of ignorance, with respect to one's person and the way we and other phenomena exist, serves not only as the source of one's existence within samsara, but also as a source of our immediate suffering and all the misery and dissatisfaction we experience.

Again, if we check, we'll see that the immediate source of our dissatisfaction is all to do with the various types of emotion we generate, like desire and hatred. We normally have desire for friends or those who are close to us, and hatred for our enemies or those distant to us. If we check our actions, then desire and hatred can be the source behind them.

If we examine the consequences of our actions, instead of benefiting ourselves or others, we are mostly harming ourselves or others. It is said that the karma which results from these negative emotions generated further creates unending suffering in one's life, and in the

unending cycle of rebirth within this worldly existence. If we can trace the root cause of all these negative emotions—whether it is desire or hatred or whatever motivates us to undertake unskillful actions which bind us in this worldly existence, we can trace the root cause to this deep-down ignorance of self-grasping.

We'll continue our discussions on the topic of wisdom, according to the root text, from the section beginning at Verse 105. The first two lines say:

O mind, understand that the topics discussed here
Are interdependent phenomena all;
For things must rely on dependent arising.

We'll discuss this more in next week's teaching. We'll finish with the chanting of the Buddha's mantra. Could people again sit in meditation posture and make yourself fully comfortable and relaxed. Then, bring the mind fully inward and focus the mind fully on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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