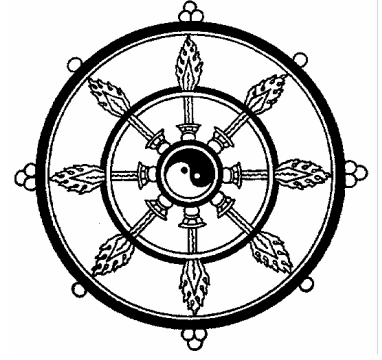


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

འདྲེན་སྐྱོད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



21 March 2001

First, we will do some breathing meditation together. Sit in the meditation posture, making sure that you are comfortable and that your body is fully relaxed.

Let's reflect on why we're doing this meditation practice and what we're trying to achieve. We're trying to overcome the negative state of mind within us that has tremendous influence over the mind. Think about how in the past - even forgetting the distant past beyond your recollection, and recalling more recent times - you have faced so many problems. These problems are all derived from this negative state of mind.

Even if we examine how we feel right now, we may be experiencing restlessness or discomfort as a result of a negative state of mind influencing us. If such a negative state of mind is not overcome, we will have to continue to put up with even more suffering and problems. So, try to generate this motivation for doing this meditation practice - to get rid of our negative state of mind and to cultivate in its place a positive state of mind.

Next, we should try to focus our mind and get rid of distracting thoughts, preventing the mind wandering off after external objects. By getting rid of external thoughts and allowing the mind to settle within, we can feel both physically and mentally relaxed. Before you begin this breathing meditation, it is important to try and let the mind simply rest within.

After having rested the mind for a while, if you feel that it is about to start wandering again after external objects, direct its focus to the inhalation and exhalation. Try to maintain single-pointed concentration on the in-breath and out-breath in such a way that you are able to mentally count the breaths. We will do this for a few minutes.

It's beneficial to learn about and understand one's own mind, because if we use the mind in the wrong way, the result will be unhappiness. For instance, if in the past we had some horrible experience, and we let our mind become preoccupied with that experience, then we will continue to re-live that bad experience.

Instead, if we have suffered losses through our actions in the past, we should try to see now how those past actions came about. What or who motivated us to undertake those actions? What was the driving force for us to do those actions? When we investigate, we realise that each of these actions has been motivated by a certain state of mind. We need to try and identify the particular state of mind that motivated us to undertake actions that we regretted later on, and which caused us to suffer.

When we identify the mind as being the main cause of all

our actions, we can see how a particular state of mind can lead to a particular action. We can even feel that we are not entirely responsible for our wrong actions, but that the particular state of mind we have identified within us is to blame. It helps us to develop such knowledge of how our mind is the main force behind all the actions we do instead of thinking that the cause of the faulty actions and wrong things that happen to us is some person, and not ourselves. You can see that by fixing the cause, you can get rid of the faulty actions.

This way of thinking helps us to gain tremendous knowledge, even in terms of the way we direct our actions in the future. We see that it is possible to decide one's own future. We can see how the practice of thought transformation is beneficial to us because it makes us into a better person.

When we talk about meditation practice, we know that the object of meditation is internal, not external. Even if you use a red flower as the object of your meditation, it is important that the object is within your mind during the meditation. What is the actual internal object of meditation? Before you begin the meditation, you may want to look at the flower and try to perceive clearly its colour, shape, and other detail. Then, when you close your eyes, you can have a picture of that flower in your mind - this image is the actual object of the meditation practice.

Now, we will look at the text called *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*. We have discussed a bit of verse 105. In that verse is a line we quoted in a previous teaching, which says:

For things must rely on dependent arising
To have an existence - they cannot stand alone.

Here, the main subject is the assertion that all phenomena, all things are empty of inherent existence. The reason given here is that all things are dependent arising. Gaining a full understanding of this subject enables one to realise the wisdom of selflessness, of the ultimate reality of oneself. This wisdom is the direct antidote to the wrong view of ignorance or self-grasping, which is the root cause of all suffering.

When the text says: 'To have an existence - they cannot stand alone', it is saying that there is no object or phenomena whose existence is self-sufficient or independent. It goes on to say that the reason for this is that all things are dependent arising.

Things are described as dependent arising because their existence depends on a collection of causes and conditions and their various components or parts.

Nothing can exist by itself without parts, or without causes and conditions; nothing can exist as a self-sufficient phenomenon.

Even though we don't normally think of things in terms of being dependent-arising, we are able to understand that things eventuate because of certain causes and conditions. For example, a farmer has good knowledge of what causes and conditions are required to yield a good crop. Without meeting the causes and conditions, you cannot expect a result. When we say that things are dependent arising, we mean they obviously do not exist by themselves, from their own side. We say they do not exist truly or self-sufficiently.

Even in conversation we sometimes refer to somebody as being 'self-sufficient', meaning that he or she can look after himself or herself, and not depend on others. We also say that some children are self-sufficient, in terms of being able to take care of themselves and not being easily influenced by their peer group. Likewise, when we talk about things existing self-sufficiently, we mean that their existence would not depend upon others. Rather, their existence would be inherently independent.

Nothing, however, exists inherently or independently. The mind perceives things unrealistically by fabricating or superimposing qualities that do not exist onto these things. All the delusions that we generate in our mind can project some quality that does not exist onto a thing or person, equivalent to a mental exaggeration. Particularly in circumstances where we feel strong desire for a particular object, it can seem very appealing to our mind. In fact, every aspect of that object is appealing and attractive to our mind. Under the influence of such strong desire, we may perceive that object as having ultimate, complete beauty.

However, as soon as this desire subsides, when we look at that same object again, it appears completely different. In fact, His Holiness the Dalai Lama said that sometimes it can make you laugh to see how suddenly your old perceptions can change. Likewise, when the mind is strongly influenced by hatred, we perceive an object as being ugly and hateful. Again, the reason why that object appears so hateful is the mental exaggeration or projections of the deluded mind.

Even though things do not exist independently or inherently, under the influence of ignorance, we perceive things as having a quality of inherent, self-sufficient existence. We even presume that this is natural, the way a particular thing exists.

Opposing the dull, ignorant mind is the wisdom that realises the ultimate reality or truth of the way things exist. The ignorant mind is the main source of the arising and proliferation of all other delusions. If you take the delusion of desire or hatred, for example, deep down within our mind, the assisting or supporting cause of all such delusions is ignorance.

Wisdom knowledge, on the other hand, is the assisting or supporting cause for all virtuous states of mind to be sustained and developed infinitely. Even when we talk of developing the mental attitude of loving kindness,

compassion and even the bodhicitta mind, for the mind to reach this state of infinite potential, it will depend upon the development of wisdom knowledge. Without developing wisdom knowledge, we cannot perfect any other form of spiritual realisation.

Even in our day to day life, by developing and utilising our intelligence, wisdom, and a clear sense of discrimination, we can solve many problems. If instead we utilise deluded states of mind like desire and hatred, rather than solving our problems we aggravate them.

For instance, if we have a relationship problem, hatred or desire will harm the relationship. However, by using your discriminating wisdom you can be more appreciative of other people, remembering all the support and help you may have received from them. With discriminating wisdom, it is therefore easier for us to show others true feelings of love and compassion.

Here, feeling love means something completely different to feeling desire. When you feel desire, you are attracted to a person as long as that person appears desirable to you. However, you may try to distance yourself from that person in circumstances where they undergo some downfall. You may lose interest in the person because you have lost your desire for them.

On the contrary, if your feeling for that person is love, at a time when that person is not doing well, you will feel closer than ever to that person. As said before, in order to sustain such love towards others, it is necessary to have some discriminating wisdom.

Now we will chant the Buddha's mantra seven times. Again, we will sit in the meditation posture. Without letting the mind become distracted, we will try to keep it focused on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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