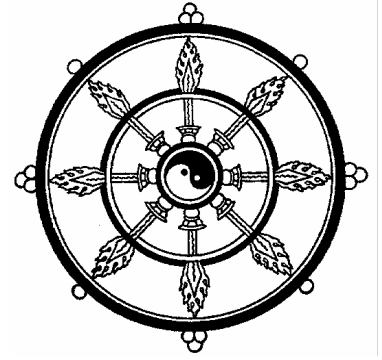


# Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

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As usual, we will begin with a few minutes breathing meditation. Choose an appropriate meditation posture, and make sure that your body is fully at rest.

When we adopt this physical posture we are effectively isolating or distancing ourselves from external noise and interactions and particularly from engaging in any wrong or negative actions. Just as we physically isolate the body from external negative actions and disturbances, we should also try to isolate the mind from 'noise', and free it from outgoing or distracting thoughts. When all distracting thoughts are pacified, our mind becomes tranquil and undisturbed.

So, before engaging in the actual breathing meditation, not only must we adopt the right physical posture, but we must also prepare ourselves mentally by bringing the mind fully inward. Only then should we go ahead with the breathing meditation, focusing the mind on the cycle of in-breath and out-breath.

Now, we will continue our discussion of this thought-transformation text, *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*.

In the preceding teachings, we learned that to develop the infinitely altruistic mind of enlightenment or bodhicitta - the mind of universal love and compassion - we must completely counteract all delusions within the mind and reach complete enlightenment. This is achieved with the support of the mind of intelligent wisdom that can directly counteract all delusions and faults within the mind - that is, the wisdom that realises the selflessness or emptiness of the self of a person, which is the ultimate truth or reality of the self of a person.

In the last teaching, we talked about the ultimate reality of the self or the person's "I" as being empty of inherent existence from its own side, in its own right. The reason a person doesn't exist inherently from his or her own side is because, as said in this text, as a phenomenon, the existence [of the "I"] is a dependent-arising - it doesn't have a self-sufficient, independent existence.

The next lines of the text further prove that the ultimate reality of all phenomena and of the person [the "I"] are empty of such inherent existence with the support of examples or analogies.

We should relate what we learn from this text to our own spiritual practice, in fact to our own lives, because the spiritual teachings we are studying should not be seen just as a part of the culture of some foreign country. Rather, whatever spiritual tradition one follows should

be relevant to one's life.

Here, we are talking about the role of intelligent wisdom in our spiritual development. Even if we have cultivated a sense of genuine love and compassion for other beings, this quality will not develop to its infinite potential unless it is supported by the wisdom that penetrates the reality of all things.

First, we have to consider the quality of this love and compassion which, as you know, is emphasised in all religious traditions as a most important part of spiritual practice. From a practical point of view we can ask ourselves: have we cultivated true love and compassion? If our answer is that we do possess such genuine love and compassion, then the beings we share that love and compassion with must be those who are close to us - the people without whom we cannot imagine living life.

The text is saying here how this feeling of love and compassion that we show to other beings must be supported by true wisdom. If, instead, this feeling is supported by mental delusions, it is doubtful that the close feeling we have for others is truly love and compassion. Like when we say we love those who are close to us, that we care about them and are so fond of them, we need to examine this feeling to see that it is not tainted by any kind of mental delusion, such as lust, desire, or obsession. If we feel lust and obsession, obviously we are not able to show genuine love and compassion to those persons.

It is important to apply this in our life. When we say we love someone, we should be showing true love to them. In most cases, when we say we love someone, it may seem as natural and effortless to us as flying is for a bird. However, in reality, [it is not]. The feeling we actually hold for them could be an obsession, tainted by a mental delusion. So, in the end, instead of your feeling for that person growing stronger after you have lived with them for a while, it actually decreases, until eventually it just disappears like a rainbow.

On the other hand, if, right from the start, we share with someone a feeling of true love not tainted by any mental delusion, then the longer we live with that person and befriend him or her, the stronger will grow that feeling of mutual love.

With any qualities we may possess, such as knowledge about some kind of spiritual teachings, it is important that they are not tainted by any mental delusion. Rather they should be supported by true wisdom. Otherwise,

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these qualities will become a source of further suffering – for instance, because of them, we may feel [pride or] jealousy towards others.

It's interesting to explore the feelings we show towards others, and the feelings they show towards us, particularly the feeling of love and compassion, or loving-kindness, that we are discussing here. The word "love" can be used in many different ways – for instance, when your parents tell you how much they love you and care about you and are concerned about you. Compare this to when the same words are said by a stranger who tells you that they love you.

Obviously, when your parents say these words to you they do not disturb your mind. Rather, these words tend to be comforting and give you a sense of security and are not threatening. Generally, such words from your parents arouse in you a very good feeling.

Of course, the fondness that many parents feel for their children may include some desire or attachment for their kids. But generally, even if a parent has this attachment, they have a greater feeling of genuine love and care for their children, which is why their care and concern is so completely unselfish, so completely directed towards the children.

When a strange man or woman says "I love you" however, this can have an immediate, excitable effect on some people's minds. It may seem very exciting and interesting at first. But if you check within you, the words do not really satisfy your mind and do not make it feel completely peaceful. Rather, your mind becomes disturbed, uneasy, and restless. You can sense that the feelings of whoever is showing interest in you and is saying these words are completely desirous. That person is attracted to you, to something that you possess. And you reciprocate in the same way.

We have to understand the consequence of such an emotional involvement, especially when the feeling that you share with someone is some form of attachment or obsession, rather than a feeling of genuine love. We can see from our own experience that attachment is not a sound reason for beginning a lasting relationship but is more likely to lead to a relationship that will end in problems.

Whatever feelings we show to others – especially to those who are close and those who we say we love – should come from deep down in our heart. Likewise, when we hear words of love from others, we have to make sure they are genuine. When we know that their love is as genuine as the feeling we get when our parents tell us they love us, we will feel comforted.

Some people do not readily trust others, because they don't just act from their emotions but utilise their wisdom and knowledge. They are wary of immediately trusting other people, even if a person says "I love you". Whereas, other people do not think of utilising their own wisdom, and may immediately rely on a stranger, trusting that person completely.

To quote the verse from the text where we left it last time

(the end of verse 105):

The process of change is alluring like magic,  
For physical form is but mental appearance,  
As a torch whirling round seems a circle of flame.

In other words, the fact that all things are subject to the process of change and disintegration shows that they do not exist inherently, from their own side.

For example, we know that this human face doesn't exist inherently, which is why we see it change continually. Also, if we consider the sky, when there are clouds in the sky we say the sky is overcast; as soon as the clouds disappear we say the sky is clear. Changes in the weather and so on can only take place because of the possibility that things do not exist inherently, from their own side.

The example is often used of a magician's illusion. Even though the objects created by a magician's powers of illusion may seem real to us – whether it is a person or a moving thing – in reality, the objects do not exist. The analogy used here is "a wheel of fire" – on a dark night, if we hold a burning stick or torch in our hand and turn it round and round, from the distance it will look like a wheel of fire. Yet there is no wheel, but rather [an effect created by] the rapid movement of our hand.

This analogy is saying that all things are mere appearances, including ourselves, our own "I" that appears to our mind as if it exists as an independent entity. However, in reality, the "I" does not exist inherently but exists as a mere designation, merely labelled by the mind. All things and their functions, all phenomena that appear to the mind, in reality are like a magician's illusion. The way they appear to our mind and the way they exist in reality do not accord with each other.

We will finish the teaching here. Now, we will chant the Buddha's mantra. Could you once again sit in a meditation posture, making sure you're comfortable and that your mind is fully stabilised inward. Then, as we chant the mantra, without getting distracted by any other object, focus the mind fully on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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