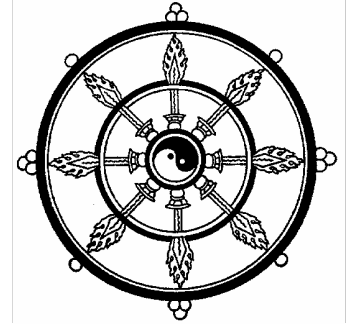


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

འདྲེན་སྐྱོད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



9th May 2001

First of all we'll do a few minutes of breathing meditation together. Just fully relax your body and then choose the sitting posture most convenient for you.

The purpose of meditation is to reduce or to minimise the mental delusions within us. The reason why we need to reduce these mental delusions within our mind is because we want inner peace, happiness and stability within our mind. Whatever actions we do, whether we achieve the result, and how much we enjoy those actions, primarily depend on our state of mind. If mentally we lack a very calm state of mind, then we cannot have stability in terms of our way of thinking, our emotions and our behaviour. Without some reasonable degree of inner mental stability, then it is also very hard to have a good memory and mindfulness.

Therefore, if we lack all these qualities, like good memory, inner peace and stability, it's very hard to achieve success and it's hard to find happiness. It's important that we try to recognise the main obstacle within our mind that prevents us from finding peace and happiness. If we examine within, it is some form of disturbing thought which is the reason why we cannot rest or properly focus on what we are doing. Somehow, we are controlled or overpowered by some sort of disturbing thought, which we call some form of 'mental delusion'. We need to look at all the types of mental delusions or disturbing thoughts and see which one is most intense or overwhelming, then try to apply the meditations to counteract that one first.

To overcome such strong or disturbing thoughts or mental delusions, doing this breathing technique is very effective, because it is so simple, and also because it doesn't require us to think too much. Rather, we can just sit and do it. When there is some sort of forceful, disturbing thought within us, then it is hard to do any other form of meditation which requires us to think and to gain skills and knowledge. That's why it's always good to start the practice which this breathing technique.

So when doing this breathing meditation practice where we focus our mind on the incoming and outgoing breath without wavering, we try to ensure that our mind sits on our breath one hundred percent. We should also try to be aware that the purpose of this meditation is not just to completely put the mind at rest but at the same time, to experience the clarity of the mind. So in the meditation our mind focuses completely on the given object and is at peace. At the same time it has this experience of clarity within the mind. So could we do this just for a few minutes. [Pause for meditation]

We will continue the discussion on this thought transformation text called *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*, We will now read from the verse we didn't finish discussing last time; Verse 107 which says;

Our foe: our insistence on ego-identities

Truly our own, which we wish were secure,
And our butcher: the selfish concern for ourselves -
Like all things these appear to be truly existent,
Though they never have been truly existent at all.

In this verse, the text has summarised the meaning of the above verse. First of all the text shows the indispensable role of this wisdom realising selflessness, which is the ultimate nature or the truth or the reality of things. It says that without gaining this wisdom we cannot reach or achieve the final spiritual goal, even if we have developed the right kind of mental intentions, like this altruistic mind of enlightenment and compassion for all beings, even very strongly. In other words, to reach our goal, we need to depend upon the combination of the union of both the *method* of our spiritual practice, which is compassion for all beings, and *wisdom*, which realises the ultimate nature of things.

The reason we need to gain wisdom is because it is the remedy or antidote to the root cause of all the shortcomings or faults we possess. The root cause which this wisdom directly counteracts is called the view of self-grasping, which is grasping things as if they have some inherent or true existence. The text shows clearly, by using various examples, that things do not exist inherently, truly, or independently.

In brief, the text shows that if we check we'll find that this self-grasping view, which is some form of misconception with respect to the ultimate nature of things, is deeply seated within us. It is something we can experience, even when we experience a strong sense of 'I'. In that experience, we then generate some form of misconception with regard to the way we see ourselves as a person and the way we exist in reality. If we examine ourselves when we have this strong experience of ourselves, or when a strong thought of 'I' arises, then if we check how the 'I' or self exists, what kind of reality this 'I' seems to have, we find that we strongly grasp or view that 'I' as if it exists independently. The 'I' appears to our mind to exist in its own right. The status of an independent and self-sufficient 'I' is so concrete and strong that we can point our finger at it. It is said that this misconception about this 'I' is said to be the source of all our shortcomings, of all unwanted things.

From there unfolds all the worldly existence we experience. It is because of this (misconception) that we then seem to have enemies, that we cultivate divisions like prejudices so that we consider some other beings as our enemies and others as friends. Even if some are not presently enemies, due to this misconception they can become our enemies. And even if someone is not truly a friend, this misconception can create those beings as our friends. Of course, those we turn into friends are even less in number than those we turn into enemies! In this way, in our thoughts and attitudes we have attachment for those we

regard as friends and hatred for others we regard as enemies. All are the outcome of this misconception. As a result of all this biased attitude of liking and disliking and so on, our life becomes like a battlefield where we always have to fight and struggle with a lots of conflict.

This verse shows that the deep-down misconception of this self-grasping is our inner enemy. We have to recognise or identify it as our enemy. The reason it is our enemy is the same reason we applied to labelling outside people as our enemies—because they bring harm and loss to our life.

The whole idea of who or what is the enemy or not is not necessarily someone who always carries lethal weapons and who appears very vicious towards us. Rather, anything that harms the peace and happiness of our life is our true enemy. If we consider the amount of harm this enemy within brings to our life, then this enemy within us is the cause or 'the mother of all other enemies'. If we do not challenge or conquer that, then we would never be able to conquer all our outer enemies. Conversely, if we are able to control or conquer the enemy within, then naturally we would conquer all outer enemies.

From the positive point of view, if we diminish this enemy within us—like the main enemy of self-grasping, and if we also diminish attachment, hatred and so forth—then the more we diminish these, the more we'll see more peace and happiness within our life. We see that there's more growth of love and compassion for other beings and of a positive state of mind within us.

What is said in this verse is that just as the self-grasping is the enemy, so is the so-called self-cherishing mind, which thinks of oneself as being above all other beings. And the object of this self-cherishing mind is oneself, which is a misconception. So all these three are the enemies (self-grasping, self-cherishing—which here is called a butcher—and oneself as a person) and have never existed. They have never had any true or independent existence, nor will they ever. All phenomena, all objects, even though they may appear to our mind as having self-sufficient existence, and appear to exist independently without depending upon others, in reality they never had such existence—even if they appear to our mind as reality.

In our daily life we have to see that it is not only the external conditions which bring happiness or suffering, we must also see and understand that our happiness and suffering is also dependent upon some internal cause. It depends upon our state of mind. Therefore we learn in meditation topics about the various states of mind which are the source of problems, and others which are the source of peace and happiness.

One of the main sources of our problems is attachment and desire, like anger and hatred. We have to understand that this attachment and anger are types of our own emotions which we generate. These emotions are not completely caused or conditioned by external objects. For example, it is not just some external pleasant object you see that causes your attachment or desire for that object. In fact, one of the principle reasons why your mind has a strong desire for that object is because of some sort of pleasant quality in your own mental perception of that object. In that perception, your mind has superimposed a pleasant quality on that object. So the attachment or desire will be stronger, especially if your mind has such strong projections of that object as having some very beautiful qualities.

Probably a lot of people already think, 'What is wrong with this attachment or desire? Isn't this something natural—showing and feeling emotions—so what's wrong with this?' You may argue you can see that there's some problem if an ordained person had a lot of desire and attachments, because they're supposed to choose the life of detachment from the sensual world. But as a lay person, it is difficult to see anything wrong in having attachment. If you take into account our emotions like anger and hatred however, then we do not have such doubt that these are something very harmful, and to our downfall.

However, it is not easy to recognise all the shortcomings strong desire and attachment bring to our life. But even if it is not possible or even necessary for us to see all forms of desire and attachment as faulty, negative states of mind, we can at least recognise the great deal of loss and suffering that very sudden and strong types of desire and attachment can bring to our life if they're not controlled. If we become completely overwhelmed and overpowered by such strong desires, like intense desire and attachment, this can even be strong enough to make us take our own life. So at least we can see the obvious downfalls of those desires.

It's important, particularly for people in very materially well-developed countries where there's no shortage of good material conditions, to understand that really, the nature of the problem that exists in these kind of societies is mainly related to people's mental attitudes and their lack of control of their emotions.

Therefore, one can have some success in terms of controlling one's mind and emotions, by knowing - as said before - that all these types of emotions which bring discomfort or dissatisfaction are not just caused by external objects, but also by internal causes. In any given situation, if you are able to control your mind, like a bad temper, then even if externally you receive abuse from some other person, that's not going to disturb your feelings or make you upset. Whereas if you give way to anger and hatred and allow it to arise within your mind, then you'll completely lose all your mental peace. As a result, whatever conditions or circumstances you face, you'll find a disturbance within yourself. If you can see even one reason why the object is not the cause of our generating attachment, hatred and so on, you could have different feelings towards that object. Towards the same object we can generate jealousy, attachment or hatred, depending on our thoughts and attitudes. For most people who live in very good material conditions, if you are then able to develop some knowledge of and skill in creating the right conditions to sustain peace and happiness, then naturally you will find peace and happiness, because there are no other obstacles in our mind or life which prevent this.

We'll finish our talk here. Before finishing the session, we will chant the Buddha's mantra seven times, and as part of chanting this mantra, again we try to sit in the meditation posture, as much as possible relaxing one's mind and body, and then while chanting, to just focus the mind on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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