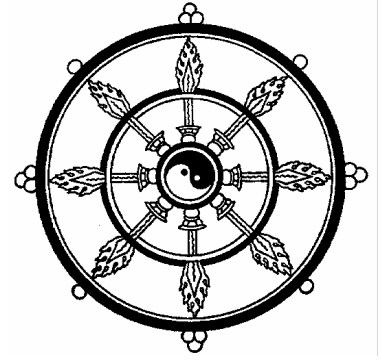


# Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

འདྲེན་ལྷན་པའི་མཚན་མོ་ཆེན་མོ་འཁོར་ལོ་།



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First, we will do a few minutes of breathing meditation together. Relax your body and adopt a comfortable meditation posture.

The reason that we sit in this meditation posture is to look inward and try to understand our mind. Even though we may have found many other good conditions in our life, if we check our mind, we will see that it is dissatisfied and lacking a sense of peace. It is not even stable enough to be able to think clearly.

We all wish for inner peace and an enjoyable life. However, when we turn our mind inward and check up, we can see that we do not have a stable inner peace or a clear direction in our life. Rather, the mind is confused and distorts everything we experience.

Therefore, sitting in meditation is chance for us to close off all thoughts of external objects, and to focus inward, trying to identify the state of the mind. As you observe your mind, you can begin to see why the mind is restless, unhappy, and clouded – it is under the influence of some disturbing thought. Because of the influence of disturbing thoughts, your mind lacks focus and thinking power. As a result, you lack strength and confidence because your mind is unfocused. As the renowned Indian master, Shantideva, said, just as someone with a disease is too weak to undertake any strong, productive action, likewise the person whose mind is always agitated and overpowered by sensual objects won't be able to achieve much.

The reason why the mind lacks stability, energy, and strength is because it is influenced by outer distractions. Normally, we are not aware that the mind is preoccupied with external distractions. However, if can find the time to relax and withdraw the mind completely inward, just trying to observe the state of the mind, we become aware of all the distractions that have filled our mind and of how these have only caused confusion and have deprived us of mental peace and happiness.

To overcome these disturbing thoughts, we engage in meditation practice. The way meditation practice works is that, during the practice, the mind is fixed on a given object. As we continue to sit in meditation, the mind becomes more familiar with or habituated to that object. As a result, we can reduce mental distractions. As our mental distractions are reduced, we experience more inner peace and stability.

Now, we will begin the breathing meditation. In this meditation, the only object for our mind to focus on is our inhalation and exhalation. As with any other

meditation practice you do, it is most important that, during the practice, the mind is completely focused on the object with single-pointed concentration.

Generally, for the beginner, it is recommended that he or she engage in as many meditation practice sessions as possible, with the duration of each session being as short as possible. Even if the session lasts just a minute or two, it doesn't matter. The important thing is that, no matter what the duration, when we sit in meditation practice, the mind is completely focused on the object. If we can't place our mind completely on the object, or otherwise find it difficult, this means that we have to shorten the duration of the meditation session. So, when you are a beginner, you need to start with as many short sessions as possible.

Now, we will do the breathing meditation for a short while. (*Pause for meditation.*)

We will now continue the discussion on the text called *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*. We are up to verse 108, which reads:

Although they appear to be concrete and real,  
They have never been real, anytime, anywhere.  
They are not things we should burden with ultimate  
value,  
Nor should we deny them their relative truth.  
As our grasping for egos and love for ourselves  
Lack substantial foundations with true independence,  
How can they yield acts that exist by themselves?  
And then how can this cruel vicious circle of  
suffering,  
The fruit of these actions, be real from its core?

As we explained the first four lines of this verse in the last teaching, we will now discuss the subsequent four lines.

These lines are saying that our view or perception of things and also the things or objects themselves do not exist inherently or truly from their own side. Even if we consider our own self or the "I" or the person, it doesn't exist in its own right, from its own side. However, that is not the way our mind perceives things.

Even in our visual perception of this building, the building appears to our mind as if it had its own, substantial existence. Likewise, if we look at a painting, again it appears to exist in its own right. In reality, if we think about why this building or painting come into existence, it is dependent on many causes and conditions.

This verse is especially concerned about the way the self

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or the “I” exist in reality. When we think of the true nature or reality of the way the “I” or the self exists, we come to see that our view of this self or “I” is incorrect. In our view, when we think of this self or “I”, it just appears to the mind to exist from its own side. The mind grasps at this “I” as being inherent or independently existent. This is known as the self-grasping view. It is an incorrect or wrong view because there is no such thing as an independently or inherently existent “I” or self of a person.

The self-grasping view and the self-cherishing attitude or self-centred mind are together recognised as being the main source of all the downfalls we experience. As with all other things, they lack inherent existence. Further, the outcome of these two minds of self-grasping and self-cherishing — all the karmic actions that we accumulate because of the self-cherishing mind and self-grasping view and the consequent mental delusions we generate within us — make us subject to the vicious cycle of suffering existence. While all the suffering we experience in this cyclic existence and the causal chain of cause and effect appear to exist inherently, in fact they are empty of such existence.

There is not much time left, but we might have time for just one question.

*Student:* Question about correctly identifying the false “I” or self as an object of meditation in the analysis of the emptiness of inherent existence of the person.

*Geshe Doga:* Someone who is not trained to catch a snake is in danger of being bitten when they handle a snake. Likewise, if someone has not thoroughly understood the first point of analysis (of emptiness of an inherently existing self) and proceeds to the next three points of the analysis — there is no rule that says they can’t proceed but if they do proceed — there is a danger of falling into the extreme view of nihilism.

As Shantideva has said, there is no way that any person who has not gained an understanding of that first point — which is to identify the object that the self is empty of, or in other words the object of negation — will gain a realisation of emptiness. Without identifying the object to be negated, the negation of that object cannot be realised.

The reason why it is important to precisely identify what emptiness is empty of is that otherwise you may view emptiness as being the non-existence of things, nothingness. Your meditation on emptiness will then become like a meditation where you’re trying to empty your mind of all objects and refuting or negating objects and fixing the mind on some sort of vacuum.

This is not like a state of meditation that gives you some experience of peace, because you are seeing everything as being the same. There is no good or bad, no happiness or suffering, and so on. You just sit in some sort of neutral state. This is not what the teachings mean when discussing meditation on emptiness.

As much as possible, you must spend time trying to understand that first point of analysis — that is, identifying the object of negation — which is the main

path to getting a realisation of emptiness or selflessness.

We have to recognise this self-grasping view and examine how things appear to that self-grasping view. Only after fully recognising this mind are you able to come to the conclusion that this mind represents a wrong view, and that things do not exist the way this mind perceives them. Only then can you gain a realisation of emptiness or selflessness, a realisation that can counteract the self-grasping view. Otherwise, if you do not fully see why this self-grasping view is totally incorrect, whatever knowledge you may have of emptiness cannot act as a direct antidote to counteracting the self-grasping view.

We will do the chanting of the mantra. As you did at the beginning of the session, choose a sitting meditation posture, making sure you feel comfortable and that your body is fully relaxed. Then, bring the mind fully inward and as you chant the mantra, try to direct the mind fully to the sound of the mantra, without getting distracted by any other object.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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