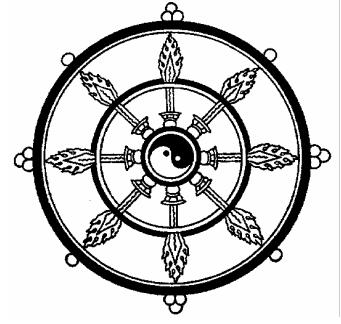


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

ཨོ སྤྱི་ལོ་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



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We will now meditate for a short time, as we normally do, on the inhalation and exhalation of the breath.

To meditate properly, one has to sit in the appropriate posture. It is important to sit straight, not to lean forward or backward too much, but to sit upright. If the body is upright, this means that the channels within the body are also straight and the energy within them can flow freely. This has a very beneficial effect on your meditation.

As well as sitting with a straight posture, it is also important that one should feel very relaxed and confident. Next, one attempts to 'call the mind back' and bring the concentration more inwards, not being distracted by outside objects too much, but having a relaxed, inwardly focused concentration.

All of this has to be done in a relaxed manner. If the mind is inwardly focused and relaxed and the body is also relaxed, one can experience the various kinds of like bliss and happiness that arise in conjunction with meditation.

At the beginning, even if we are physically relaxed, we might not immediately experience the bliss that arises from meditation. However, slowly, slowly through practice, if we manage to bring the mind home in a very relaxed manner, then can continue to focus inward and avoid the mind being distracted, then, slowly, slowly one can start to experience some inner peace and happiness.

We can take the example of going to sleep, when we lie down comfortably on our bed. Maybe we have bought a special mattress that cost us, say, \$3,000 together with nice blankets or doona and coverings that also cost us, say, \$700 or \$1,000. So, we have a very, very comfortable bed. However, even though physically we are very comfortable, if we don't manage to bring our scattered mind to rest - if we can't bring our mind home, and it keeps straying to various outer objects and getting distracted - then we won't be able to sleep.

This illustrates the importance of bringing the mind home and trying to avoid letting it become too distracted by outer objects. Even though the technology may be beneficial, as long as we are not able to relax the mind and go to sleep, we won't benefit from it.

So, let us rest the mind and physically remain in a relaxed posture. In this relaxed state, we can focus inwardly and experience the benefit of mental relaxation, peace, and happiness. If we can meditate in this way, our mind will become stable and pliant. In other words, it will feel very light and under our control, so that we will experience mental bliss.

Everybody wants and needs to experience the various results of meditation, which one can get if one meditates in the manner just described. So, one could ask oneself, why does one not experience those qualities at the moment? The reason is that the mind is distracted by outer objects and by various thoughts going around and around. We are always keeping the mind busy with outer objects. We must forget about those outer objects, regardless of whether they are beneficial or not, or good or bad. We just have to forget about them and bring the mind back home, trying to focus inwards and not let the mind stray outside.

Having assumed a relaxed sitting posture, and focusing the mind inwards in a relaxed way, try to remain in that state for some time, in a kind of meditation without an object. Then, when the mind starts to wander outside again, and thoughts begin to recur, we start to focus on our breathing, on the coming-in and going-out of

the breath. In this meditation, when we focus on the inhalation and exhalation, we don't have to breathe. The breathing is supposed to be very gentle and soft. Actually, it is supposed to be so soft that one doesn't even feel air coming in and out of the nostrils.

Trying to keep one's mind focused on the coming and going of the breath is said to be a very good method to help keep the mind focused inside, which prevents it from being distracted towards outside objects. So, we can meditate in this way for some minutes. (*Pause for meditation.*)

Please all arise from meditative equipoise! Teaching Dharma and listening to Dharma while remaining in meditative equipoise is something that only buddhas can do. Geshe-la says that he finds it difficult to do these things while in meditative equipoise.

Now we will go to the root text, *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*. We are at verse 109, which says:

Although all things thus lack inherent existence,
Yet just as the face of the moon can be seen
In a cup of clear water reflecting its image,
The various aspects of cause and effect
Appear in this relative world as reflections.

In the previous part of the text, we covered the generation of conventional bodhicitta, or what is referred to as the method aspect of the path - generating a bodhicitta mind (aspiring to enlightenment for the benefit of all beings), and also generating great compassion. Now we come to the generation of ultimate bodhicitta.

Having generated conventional bodhicitta, one needs to also meditate on and generate ultimate bodhicitta. To do this, one needs to meditate on selflessness - the absence of inherent or true or natural existence, and so forth - by developing an understanding through reasoning.

While meditating on the absence of inherent, true existence, some doubt may arise in the mind: If everything is empty of true, inherent existence, then what has happened to cause and effect? If karma is empty, does it mean that karma is non-existent? This verse is trying to show us that even though all phenomena are empty of inherent existence, they can still conventionally fulfill a function. They are still conventionally subject to the law of cause and effect, they still exist in this sense.

The first line here says, "Although all things thus lack inherent existence". Here, "things" refers to the person, for example. Just as the person is empty of inherent existence, so too the causes of the person are empty of inherent existence. The result - the person - is empty of inherent existence. Self-grasping is also empty of inherent existence. In this way, all phenomena and all cause and effects lack inherent existence.

But, as mentioned before, just because we say that cause and effect are empty of inherent existence, that doesn't mean they are non-existent. When it is said that they are empty of inherent existence, one should not take this to mean that they are empty of existence. That is two different things. What is meant here is that everything is empty of *inherent* existence.

To our mind, all phenomena appear as inherently existing, as though they exist from their own side, so we have this appearance in our mind of phenomena as existing from their own side. But this appearance is deceptive. It is a false appearance, but as yet we haven't realised this. All phenomena are like a reflection of the moon in a still lake - when these two things come together, we see the reflection of the moon in the lake. Even though this reflection

appears to be inherently existing and may appear to be the moon, it is actually neither. It is just a mere reflection of the moon. In this way, all phenomena are just mere reflections, empty of inherent existence.

Even though everything is empty of inherent existence, including cause and effect, we know from our own experience that cause and effect do exist. We know that if we plant a seed in the ground, and all the causes and conditions come together, a tree or flower will grow from it. So, we know that conventionally cause and effect does exist and is something we cannot refute. We know if the conditions come together – like the clear lake and the moon in the sky – what we get is the reflection in the lake of the moon. This reflection is something we cannot conventionally negate – the reflection does exist in the lake.

Since all causes and effects are just like this reflection in that they still exist, we should strive to create virtuous karma in order to obtain future happiness, and avoid negative karma in order to avoid future suffering. We will still work towards reaping the harvest and getting benefit, because cause and effect still exist conventionally, just like the reflection of the moon in the lake.

Actually it is said that cause and effect exist *because* they do not exist truly. Because cause and effect are empty of true existence, they can exist. They can function because, if they are empty of true existence, a cause can generate a result. So, because everything is empty of true existence, we have to create virtue and watch our karma and be aware of cause and effect.

With regard to karma, we have what is called white or virtuous karma, and black or negative karma. How do white and black karma, or positive and negative karma come about? Lama Tsong Khapa said that white or black karma come about through “pure and bad”. What he is referring to is that through a pure and good mind comes good karma, and from a bad or negative state of mind comes negative or black karma. So, all karma is created from the virtuous and non-virtuous mental states within one’s continuum.

Therefore, the motivation with which we engage in various actions becomes very important. For example, when we talk with different people, they may say the same thing. But if one person says it with a positive and virtuous motivation, and the other one with no motivation at all or with a negative motivation, the result or the karma created from that speech would be completely different.

Our state of mind, whether positive or negative, always precedes the actions of our body and speech. If we have a very compassionate, loving and caring attitude towards others and with that attitude, for example, speak with others, then whatever we say will come over as being very friendly, and our facial expressions will also be peaceful and nice. Immediately, the other person will generate happiness in their mind. They will like us and what we have to say. When you observe the expression on the face of the other person you will see that they are happy and that they are starting to like you.

In this case, both you and the other person are experiencing the immediate effect of a virtuous, positive mental attitude and of the actions resulting from that attitude. While this immediate positive effect is only instantaneous and will disintegrate in the next moment, the power of that karma will remain on our mental continuum in the form of a karmic imprint or potential and go with our mental continuum to a future life. There, it will ripen again in the experience of happiness.

This principle works the other way around. If we have a very negative state of mind – if we are proud, angry or jealous, or whatever negative emotion dominates our mind – then under the control of that negative emotion, if we engage in actions of body and speech, we will not generate any happiness or affection in the mind of the other person. Whatever we say will immediately cause some kind of dislike and unhappiness to arise in the mind of the other person, as well as unhappiness in our own mind. Further, at this point, some negative karma is created. So, even though the immediate effect of that action disintegrates in the next instant, the power of such karma will be left behind on the mental continuum in the form of a karmic potential that will again go with our mind to a future life, and ripen as various suffering results.

Even though the practice of karma and of watching one’s karma – being aware of the law of cause and effect – is vast, it is important is that one checks up to see whether one’s actions are right with respect to the other person. Are we doing the right thing for the other person, or is it the wrong thing? It is important always to be very honest towards those around us and try not to deceive them.

We all have to engage in some form of work during the day to earn money or to receive a monthly wage. So it is good to have this attitude that: “I will do my job well in order not to deceive my employer/(client)”, and so to fully earn your income. Having this kind of positive attitude of doing the right thing is watching one’s karma by being honest towards those around us, and is very important.

Lama Tsong Khapa said that the various types of karma are generated from the various virtuous and non-virtuous states of mind. It is important that one is not only concerned with one’s own happiness, but is also concerned with the happiness of the other person. Just as we want only happiness and don’t want suffering, so too does the other person wish for happiness and to avoid suffering. Geshe-la says that he has already emphasised many, many times that what we really need in our life is a pure and good mind and also pure and good actions.

We need to understand that happiness will not come from outside objects, but by understanding the law of karma to generate some true inner mental happiness. It’s very important to have a positive, good, and non-harmful mind. That is what one really needs to be able to live a good life.

So, from the start, it is important to generate faith in the law of cause and effect, and the way to do this is by observing one’s own mind. When we meditate on compassion, which is said to be a virtuous state of mind, we can see for ourselves that this will generate happiness both in the present and in the future. States of mind such as compassion are positive, and thus the karma they create is positive – this is something in which one can definitely have faith.

In the same way, negative states of mind such as greed, hatred, and anger are negative and produce negative karma. It is urgent that we understand this to avoid creating unhappiness in the present moment for oneself and others, and creating unhappiness for ourselves in the future. Through observing one’s mind, one can easily generate faith and conviction that certain states of mind are positive and will have a positive result in the future, and that other states of mind are negative and will have a suffering result in the future.

We will finish here for today and have a short meditation. Remember what we said before about trying to focus the mind more inward, and bringing the mind home. After doing this, we can recite the main mantra of Shakyamuni Buddha and also try to concentrate single-pointedly on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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