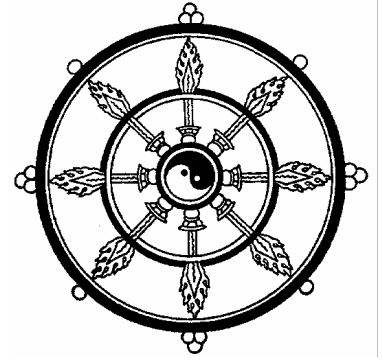


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by The Venerable Tenzin Dongak

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Just as usual, please sit in a relaxed manner; but also take care that you don't fall asleep!

In order to meditate we need to have the proper motivation for meditation. What does meditation actually mean? It means that we are trying to lessen our delusions.

If we find that there has been some change in our mind and that we have less delusions in our mind, then that is a sign that our meditation has had some success. And whether one is a great yogi or a mahasiddha or not can be judged by how many delusions that person has reduced in his or her mind. If we apply the various antidotes to the delusions during our meditation, then definitely we will be able to oppose those delusions. Then once we have opposed those delusions we will experience more awareness and clarity within our mind.

In ordinary terms, we call somebody who is very brave (for example during war), who conquers many enemies, a 'hero' or 'heroine'. But in the Dharma context, those whom we can call 'hero' or 'heroine' are those who are very courageous in overcoming inner enemy of the delusions. Those delusions have a particular function. What is their function? The function is to make our mind very disturbed. If we sit with a very calm and quiet mind and some delusions arise in our mind we can observe that they have the effect of destroying the calm peace of our mind, and they will disturb our mental continuum and make it disturbed and unhappy. Sometimes we have this idea that our mental unhappiness and restlessness is caused by some outside conditions, but in fact our mental unhappiness is caused by our delusions.

It is very important that we oppose those delusions which arise in our mental continuum and that we don't just leave them there once they have arisen. We can observe through our own experience that when various delusions arise the effect they have is to make our mind dissatisfied and unhappy. So then it becomes very important to oppose those delusions with the various antidotes.

Now at this present moment because the meditation we are going to do is the meditation on the coming and going of the breathing, this particular meditation is the antidote against too much conceptualising. This meditation is usually recommended for somebody who is suffering from too much conceptualising. But now, regardless of whether you have that problem or not, we are going to do that meditation. The effect of doing this meditation is to clam the mind, to stop the conceptualising mind. Also, the coming and going of the breathing doesn't really have any particular shape or colour. That's why it is not harmful to the mind to try to concentrate on that particular object.

What we have to do is bring the mind, which is normally distracted towards outer objects, back home and focus it inwards—not just partially focusing inwards, sort of thinking that it is still okay to be distracted by some outer

objects and that it is 'good enough that I am focused inwardly with part of my mind'. That is still not good enough. Try to focus your mind one hundred percent inside, bring the mind home one hundred percent. Then try to remain single-pointedly in the state of non-conceptualisation where one actually meditates without any particular object. When one realises that the mind is again sort of getting restless and is trying to escape to various objects outside, then we focus the mind on the coming and going of the breath. It is very important to try to bring about this single-pointed focus on the inside, and to try to concentrate the mind single-pointedly towards the inside. Sometimes when our mind is distracted towards the outside then there is not any particular benefit. Also, when we see outer objects for example, they are actually reflected within our mind—the reflection of the outer objects appears within our mind.

So we can do that for a few minutes. {Pause for meditation.}

Okay, then we can go to the text, *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*, Verse 111:

When our minds are delirious, burning with fever,
Although there is not darkness, we feel we are
plummeting
Further and further into a black pit
With the walls pressing closer the deeper we fall.
In similar fashion, although our dark ignorance
Lacks self-existence, we nevertheless
Must by all means break out of its strangling constriction
By putting the three kinds of wisdom to use.

So our ignorance, which is the grasping at inherent existence, is the cause of all the various sufferings. Here it gives an example of somebody who is burning with a very strong fever, so his mind has become completely delirious. Even though it is not actually happening, that person can have various kinds of hallucinations. This person can think that he is sort of falling into a dark pit, or that the walls around him are closing in further and further. So it is possible that through having a very strong fever, one has these various hallucinations which are caused because the person believes in the *appearance* of those hallucinations. This then causes that person to suffer, to experience various kinds of fears and so forth. And that person experiences those various sufferings and fears even though what actually appears to his mind is completely non-existent. Somebody who doesn't have a fever, who is perfectly healthy, can see very clearly that the walls are not closing in on that person, that the person is not falling into a dark pit further and further—he's just lying there on the bed.

So while this is happening in the mind of the person, he has only this *appearance* in his mind and because of this appearance he experiences those various sufferings. So in the same way, because of the self-grasping in the mind, then

one has this appearance of true existence within one's own mind. Because one believes in this true existence then one experiences various kinds of sufferings. But even though those various kinds of sufferings one experiences lack inherent existence, they still exist conventionally. So they can't be completely negated. Conventionally it is still valid to say that the person experiences those various sufferings.

So this mind in the continuum of the person who has a fever and who perceives himself as falling into a dark pit—that mind which perceives that is what we call 'mistaken mind' and a 'wrong mind'. In the same way, some people with some kind of affliction of the eyes, instead of seeing one moon they see ten moons. That would be like a wrong or mistaken mind. So once that person knows, or once we know that this particular state of mind of ours was wrong or it was mistaken, then we won't believe in what that mind is trying to tell us. That becomes very important because all the various delusions in our mind are all wrong and mistaken minds. They all perceive the objects in completely exaggerated ways.

Desire tries to tell us how to get more happiness and anger tries to protect our happiness.

For example, desire completely exaggerates the attractive aspect of the object and anger completely exaggerates the negative aspect of the object. We all know that if strong desire arises in our mind for a particular object, at that moment that object appears incredibly attractive. But when the desire for that object lessens then we start to see various faults in the object and other sides to it. That sort of shows this aspect of attractiveness—that the attractive or beautiful aspect one sees in the object is generated by the mind. In the same way with anger, anger completely exaggerates the negative aspects of the object. This is why when one experiences strong anger at a particular object or person, one is not able to see the good sides of that person or object. But then once the anger has calmed down and been pacified then that object no longer appears undesirable. It no longer appears 'bad', 'horrible' and 'terrible' and one also starts to see all the good aspects in the person or the situation and so forth, appearing completely different to one's mind.

Anger and attachment try to lead us by the nose, giving us wrong advice all the time. Attachment is saying that having a particular object will make you happy and anger is trying to protect whatever happiness we have. Because normally we are under the control of attachment and anger, we follow these various hallucinations and various sorts of misleading advice anger and attachment give us. But then once we have realised that anger and attachment are actually what we call 'mistaken' and 'wrong' minds and that they completely exaggerate whatever we perceive, completely distort our reality, once we become aware of that then we can distance ourselves from anger and attachment. We are able to say, "I don't really believe what you are trying to tell me". That is very important.

So when we have generated strong desire, for example for another person, then that person will appear to our mind in a very strong beautiful and desirable aspect, like there could not possibly be anything undesirable about their body. But we all know what we have to do to overcome that strong desire; we have to apply the antidote. The opposite point of view has to be generated. We have to analyse the object of the desire. For example, in relation to a human body, if one

looks closely there is not really anything in the slightest to be found which could be termed desirable. If one looks from one's feet up to the top of one's head and inside the body at all the various things which can be found there, there is not really anything which could be termed attractive or desirable. Once this is understood then the desire will be automatically pacified. So that is what is called 'applying the antidote by looking at the opposite of what desire apprehends'.

It is very important to do that kind of meditation because you shouldn't leave your mind under the control of very strong desire. Once you start doing this analytical meditation of going through the various substances inside the body, like bones, flesh, blood, sinew and substances like urine, faeces, intestines and so forth, and once you understand all the different substances out of which the body is made, the effect will be to automatically pacify the very strong desire within your mind.

Doing this meditation has very great benefit for your own mind. It will definitely work because that is how the mind works. In the same way, it also becomes very important to analyse the object of your own anger. For example, regarding the person towards whom you have generated lots of anger: How much happiness does that person have? How much suffering do they have? Once we understand that that person is actually completely overcome by his or her life problems and completely miserable, then we won't generate anger. Our anger will automatically die down because we don't usually get angry at people whom we can see are in a very desperate and poor suffering situation. Actually on top of that, we will then be able to generate some warm feelings and some compassion for that person. To do these various analytical meditations into the objects of attachment and anger are very beneficial for our own mind and they definitely work because they follow the psychological make-up of our mind.

So as it says in the text, in a similar fashion although our ignorance lacks self-existence, we nevertheless must break out of its strangling constrictions by putting the three kinds of wisdom to use. Here it is saying is that because our self-grasping is also a wrong and mistaken mind, just like desire and anger, it can also be opposed by the appropriate antidote, by generating the opposing wisdom which here is wisdom realising selflessness. Once we understand selflessness then we can understand that self-grasping is a wrong and mistaken mind and therefore that it can be purified from the mind stream, together with its karmic imprints and potentials. Now we have already understood how desire or anger are wrong and mistaken minds. There is a discrepancy between reality and what appears to our minds through the force of desire and anger. Therefore, because desire and anger are also wrong minds, they are not of one nature with our mental continuum. They don't have a permanent place or home within our mind because they are actually wrong and mistaken minds. Because they are wrong and mistaken minds, they can be opposed with the appropriate antidotes and purified from our mind stream.

Because those various delusions are wrong and mistaken minds, therefore they can be opposed by the various kinds of wisdom that act as their antidote. Just as in an ordinary situation where there are two people, one who is always completely telling rubbish and the other who is always telling the truth, when they have an argument the person

who is telling the truth will prevail. Because no matter how much rubbish you speak, in the end you can't negate the truth. In the same way, we should never feel that we cannot oppose the various disturbing emotions and delusions in our mind. Even though at the moment we are under their control, we definitely should not feel that there is nothing we can do about them. If we apply the various antidotes to those delusions then most definitely we can purify those delusions from our mind stream and realise our own inner Buddha nature.

At the moment our own inner Buddha nature is obscured by the very strong conceptualising mind, but once that mind has been opposed then our Buddha nature will shine through. It is just like the sun is always shining even though sometimes there are clouds in the sky and it is very cloudy and we can't see the sky. But, definitely, the sun is always shining behind the clouds. In the same way even though at the moment our Buddha nature might be obscured, it is definitely still there shining away. It only depends on us applying the various opposites, the antidotes, to the delusions and the disturbing states of mind, which obscure our Buddha nature. Then when we can purify those obscurations, our Buddha nature can again shine through and we become enlightened.

It says in the last line (of the text) that how we oppose self-grasping and the other delusions is by putting the three kinds of wisdom to use. So in relation to opposing self-grasping, those three kinds of wisdom are: the wisdom realising emptiness which arises from hearing, the wisdom realising emptiness which arises from contemplation and the wisdom realising emptiness which arises from meditation. A slightly different way of positing the three wisdoms are: The first wisdom, again, is the wisdom realising emptiness arising from listening, the second wisdom is the inferential cogniser realising emptiness, and the third wisdom is the direct perception realising emptiness.

In relation to the three kinds of wisdom—wisdom arising from hearing, contemplation and meditation—at first how we generate a certain kind of wisdom and understanding is through listening to various teachings. We then get some kind of mental or inner idea, 'Ah, that's what the Dharma is about.' But we don't just leave it there. Then we have to contemplate on that, we have to think about it for ourselves. The first wisdom comes about through outer conditions, through listening to somebody else. Then we have to contemplate further for ourselves what we have listened to, to increase the understanding we have generated by listening. After having contemplated what we have listened to, then we have to meditate on it. We have to increase it and make it stronger again. For example in relation to meditation, at first we hear about the benefits of meditation then we get some kind of idea about all the benefits of meditation. Then we have to contemplate those benefits, to think about them for ourselves and then we will generate conviction that meditation definitely will have some benefit for us. And then we have to again increase that by actually meditating, by generating the wisdom of meditation. That is the advice of Atisha and the Kadampa Geshe: that one should always practice those three kinds of wisdom. First generate the wisdom of hearing and then increase that wisdom of hearing by practising contemplation. Then when one has generated the wisdom, which comes out of contemplation, again we increase that wisdom of

contemplation by practising meditation and making it a wisdom of meditation.

So, if you have a question, we have time for a question.

Question: I'm not quite sure of your definition of 'desire' in that I'm sure most people here desired coming here, and so they end up coming. So are there some kinds of desires that have positive results and should not be purified?

Answer: Geshe-la says we shouldn't confuse desire with wishes. Just because we have to oppose the desires within our mind, that doesn't mean that we have to oppose all our wishes. Wishes are not necessarily wrong and mistaken minds, because the objects of our wishes can be perfectly valid and existing. What desire does is to exaggerate the value and quality of the objects of our wishes. This aspect of exaggerating the object then leads to confusion.

For example, you can have various kinds of wishes, like the wish of wanting to have happiness only for oneself. This is one kind of wish, the very selfish wish of wanting to have happiness only for oneself. That would be a mistaken kind of wish. Then, on the other side, you have the wish of wanting to make other people happy, for example wanting to share whatever knowledge and wisdom you have with others and wanting to benefit them in that way. That would be another kind of wish—wanting to help and benefit others. That kind of wish most definitely and positively should be developed, like when parents wish to share whatever money they earn with their children and always dedicate the money they earn towards them. So that is again a very valuable and beneficial kind of wish, which should definitely be developed. On the other hand, if you just work with the very selfish kind of wish to attain lots of money so you can then have many companions or girlfriends and so forth, then that would again be some kind of mistaken wish. Actually here Geshe-la says that within wishes themselves can be divided into positive and negative ones.

Please do as we explained before. Sit down in the meditation position comfortably and try to bring the mind home, not being distracted by outer objects. Try to concentrate on the inside and then to focus single-pointedly on the words of the mantra which we are going to recite while being in that state.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

Transcribed from tape by Gaye Lewis-Radcliffe

Edited by Dianne McDonald

Checked by Venerable Tenzin Dongak

Edited Version

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