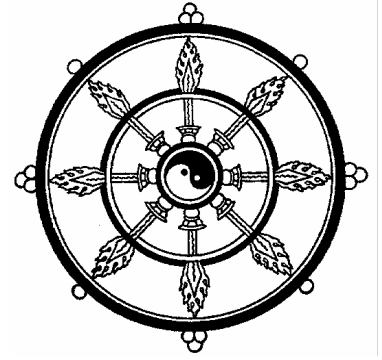


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

འཇིགས་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



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Please sit in a relaxed manner and we can as usual meditate for few minutes.

We meditate for the purpose of gaining control over our mind. It is very important to have control over one's mind. At the present time, our mind is under the control of the various delusions and, because of that, we engage into various harmful and negative actions.

We have what is called self-grasping, which causes very strong feelings of self and 'I' to arise. One grasps very strong towards that feeling of 'I' and self and, from that, one also starts to grasp at 'mine'. So, first one grasps at I then, from that, comes the grasping at mine - my body, my possessions, my place. From this one generates attachment towards what makes the self happy and what one regards as one's own, and generates aversion towards what makes the self unhappy and what one regards as other. Out of that attitude, one engages in various harmful actions.

So, to practise meditation means to habituate one's mind to virtuous, pure and positive states. It's very important that one uses the mind's pure and virtuous ability and, through meditation, to habituate and accustomise the mind more and more towards those states, and lessen negative states of mind. If we are able to do that then, automatically, our actions of body and speech will also become virtuous and positive. When all our actions of body, speech, and mind become more pure and positive, then, from our own side, we can say we have become a good person. Also, when other people look at us, they will see a good, virtuous and nice person.

One has to take care of one's own happiness, to be responsible for one's own happiness - both for our happiness of mind and for one's own physical happiness. To take care of our mental happiness, we have to increase the positive and the virtuous side of the mind, and make use of the mind's positive and virtuous potential. In that way, one's physical and verbal actions will also become pure and positive, and one will be able, for example, through physical actions of the body to give happiness to others, or help others; through actions of speech, to make others happy, or help others; and within one's mind, to experience inner happiness and have a pure mind.

We have to develop wisdom, discriminative awareness. If we realise that we are going in the wrong direction or that our mind is going in a wrong direction and is becoming unhappy, we have to reverse that tendency. The great Buddha, Shantideva, said that one needs to know the way the mind works. We need to understand how our mind works. Then, by making use of that knowledge, one can attain true happiness.

Everybody wants happiness and wants to avoid suffering and, out of that motivation, engages in various activities. If we find that the activities in which we engage bring us

more suffering and no happiness, it is important to stop those activities.

So, sitting in a relaxed posture, bring the mind home, focusing it one hundred percent within. Then, for some time, try to keep the mind in a non-conceptual state, focussed within.

Once we find that the mind is again trying to escape towards the outside, we focus the mind on the coming and going of the breath. When we do this, we shouldn't just observe the breath, with a division between the mind and breath. Rather, the mind and the breath should become one. If we focus on our breathing in this manner, it will not be possible for negative, harmful thoughts to arise in our mind. *(Pause for meditation.)*

So then we will go to the text, verse 116:

When not making formal dissections with logic,
Merely letting life's happenings flow freely on,
Although we experience feelings of pleasure,
In ultimate truth this appearance of happiness
Lacks self-existence inherently real.
And yet on the everyday operative level
This seeming appearance has relative truth.
To understand fully this deep profound meaning
For slow-minded persons, alas, will be hard.

In the Tibetan version (of this verse), there is at the beginning the syllable 'ema', which denotes something very important - that cause and effect or dependent arising and emptiness should not be seen as mutually exclusive, but as complementary.

Dependent arising can either mean arising in dependence upon causes and conditions, or existing in dependence upon the parts. Once we understand dependent arising - that something has come about in dependence upon its causes and conditions, or exists in dependence upon its parts - then automatically the perception of independent existence will be eliminated in our mind, and we will understand the absence of independent existence. When we directly we understand dependent arising, we will implicitly understand emptiness. So, emptiness and dependent arising are not two mutually exclusive phenomena. This is a very important point.

The first line says: "When not making formal dissections with logic, Merely letting life's happenings flow freely on". This means that, at times when we don't practise ultimate analysis of emptiness, conventional phenomena will appear to our mind normally. For example, the table in front of us: if you don't analyse its ultimate mode of existence, then the table will just appear to us, and we will believe in that appearance. But, once we analyse where this object that appears to our mind actually can be found, we find that it cannot be found through ultimate analysis. So we have these two situations: the time when we practise analysis

into emptiness, and the time when we are not.

At times when we don't practise analytical meditation on emptiness, or don't investigate or analyse, conventional phenomena will just appear like the verse says: merely letting life's happenings flow freely, we will experience feelings of pleasure, and so forth.

At times of non-analysis and non-investigation, if you see another person, like Peter for example, then Peter will appear to your mind. You start to think "Oh, there's Peter". But if we analyse and investigate where that Peter actually is - can he be found within the feet, or within the legs, or within the body, or the head? - we will find that Peter is nowhere to be found on the base of the aggregates that is standing over there. So, even though Peter appears to our mind, and even though we experience feelings of pleasure and so forth, they actually don't have any essence. As it says here, they lack self-existence, they are not inherently real.

It is important to know that this appearance of inherent or independent existence that we perceive from the side of the object only comes about because our mind is influenced by the karmic potential of ignorance. This is why conventional phenomena appear to us as existing from their own side, inherently.

To understand the meaning of this profoundly requires us to fully understand the meaning of dependent arising. So, of all the various deep and profound subjects, the meaning of dependent arising is the most profound. Therefore, for slow-minded people, it will be hard to understand. Here, slow-minded people refers to people who follow, for example, the Sautantrika Madhyamika tenet or the 'mind only' tenet, or any of the other lower Buddhist tenets. Those people are regarded as slow-minded people for whom it will be difficult to understand the very profound meaning of dependent arising.

The next verse reads:

And now when we try to do close contemplation
On voidness, how can we have even a feeling
Of conventional truth at the very same time?
Yet what can there be that has true self-existence?
And what can there be that lacks relative truth?
How can anyone anywhere believe in such things?

"When we try to do close contemplation" refers to single-pointed meditation on emptiness. A person who has already understood emptiness will single-pointedly concentrate on the realisation of emptiness. At such a time, no conventional phenomena will appear to that person's mind. We would say that the appearance of emptiness in the meditator's mind will be completely unmixed with any kind of conventional appearance. Conventional phenomena or even the generality of existence and so forth won't appear to that meditator's mind, or won't be mixed with the appearance of emptiness in that meditator's mind.

We will finish with this verse. The last two verses we can finish next Wednesday and, on the following Wednesday, we will start the *Thirty-Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva*.

Do you have any questions?

Question: May I ask? I have no problem with dependent arising, particularly in the case of the table. What I have a problem with is putting emptiness into that situation. Is it empty because it is not independently, is it empty independent, dependent, arising? The analogy is glass of water, I've got a glass of water, and I can see whether it is full or empty. It is empty of water but what actually is the

table empty of? Is it independent arising?

Answer: Actually, we don't say that the table is empty. Rather, we say that on the basis of the table there is emptiness. The table is established in dependence upon the collection of many parts, so it cannot be independent or inherently existent. An independent or inherently existent table would have to exist independently of any kind of parts. So these two modes are completely opposite.

So, since the table exists in dependence upon the collection of many parts, and since it cannot be something that exists independently of parts, therefore we say that the table lacks inherent existence. But we don't say that the table itself is emptiness. Emptiness is regarded as a permanent phenomenon. The table is an impermanent phenomenon, which came about through causes and conditions. Is that ok? (Geshe Doga laughing) That was a very good question. It is very good to have these kinds of doubts and to investigate them.

For example, if somebody tells you there is a full glass of water and then somebody tells you that the glass of water is empty, that will sound completely nonsensical. He would say that that person is crazy! (More laughter from Geshe Doga) Geshe-la says he's not quite crazy yet!!

(Everyone laughs)

Fourth person explaining question: He's saying that he is more likely to learn from watching others than trying to learn by watching himself. He thinks that to look at others, to look outside, is more beneficial than it is for him to look internally at his own mind.

Geshe-la: We have to first investigate emptiness in relation to our own mind, to ourselves. If there is a thief in our house and we run into the field to catch the thief in the field, we will not have much success. So, we have to catch the thief wherever he is. That's why normally when one starts analysing emptiness, one starts with oneself. There are two kinds of grasping - grasping at the self, and grasping at 'mine'. Grasping at mine is preceded by grasping at the self or the I. What we do here is we analyse, our mind during our life, and analyse how the self or the I appears. We find that the I seems to appear to exist independently or inherently. Then, once we have identified this appearance in our mind of an independent self, we analyse whether this appearance concurs with reality, or whether there is some discrepancy between appearance and reality -- is it a correct appearance or is it a wrong mind? If it is a wrong mind, if it is a wrong appearance, then it can be opposed, it can be purified from the mind. Was that answer OK for you?

Question: unintelligible

Answer: If we were all one in reality, then how does it come about that we don't think as one? We have this perception of I and mine, and then we divide our world up into I and mine on one side, and others on the other side. We don't think of other people as I or mine. And if they are possessions, normally we don't think of those possessions as belonging to everybody, that everybody thinks of {end side A of tape}

{beginning side B of tape} mind, and so therefore we become different people.

For example, other people will regard me as "other" - when they look at me, they will think "Oh, it's him, there is somebody else". They won't look to me and say "Oh, that's me" and the other way round.

Question: unintelligible

Geshe-la: Then that's good if that works for you.

Everybody wants to become enlightened, to become somebody who has no faults, who has all the good qualities, and who has no difficulties and no problems with everything just happening naturally. That is something that everybody wants.

So there is only the appearance of emptiness.

Question: About how is it that the appearance of emptiness to the mind is not mixed with other appearances

Geshe-la: The appearance of emptiness to the mind realising emptiness is completely unstained by any kind of defilements or impurities, just as the words in the text just mentioned. There is absolutely no kind of conventional appearance or any other kind of appearance apart from emptiness. The absence of conventional appearance to the non-dual wisdom realising emptiness is emptiness.

As mentioned before, bring the mind home completely, concentrating it within and then, while reciting the mantra, focus one hundred percent on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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