

Dharmarakshita's "*The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

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We will do some breathing meditation first. Adopt a suitable meditation posture and make sure that you feel relaxed.

When practising meditation it is important to sit in a posture where we feel physically relaxed. However, at the same time it is important to have our mind alert, otherwise we may fall asleep in meditation.

After choosing a relaxing meditation posture we need to adjust our frame of mind before engaging in the meditation practice. In doing this we try to get rid of all the thoughts which go after external objects. Let the mind just rest and fully bring it inward. When the mind is fully brought inward, you will feel as if there are no objects for the mind to follow. We can only stay in that state of objectless mind for a little while before the mind again wanders after the usual external objects. So we should bring the mind back to the meditation object, which in this case is the breath, going out and coming in through the nostrils.

It is recommended that when we are focusing the mind on the meditation object then the focus should not be too tight, because this can bring sleepiness or mental sinking in the meditation. Also if your focus is too loose then you may lose the object or get distracted in the meditation. It is best to utilise our own experience as we meditate, and gauge for ourselves the degree of concentration needed in the meditation. With all this in mind we will now do this breathing meditation for just a few minutes. There are a lot of reasons to appreciate doing this meditation practice. We need to find the best and most effective technique which can develop our mental concentration and our understanding of the mind, as well as trying to develop the qualities of our mind.

Tonight we begin the teaching on the text, 'The Wheel of Sharp Weapons'. This text was composed by the famous Indian Buddhist master Dharmarakshita. It was brought to Tibet by the great Indian Pandit Atisha (982 - 1054) and translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan by Atisha and his main student, Drom Tonpa.

In terms of the type of the teachings, this particular teaching belongs to the category called the thought transformation teachings or mind training teachings. Generally speaking, we don't call other teachings, such as the Lam Rim style of teachings, mind training or thought transformation teachings. The term 'thought transformation' or 'mind training' in Tibetan is called 'lo jong'. The first syllable 'lo' is mind and 'jong' is the transformation or the training which has the meaning

implication 'to learn' or to purify, to get rid of something. The meaning of 'jong' as a learning means that by following this thought transformation teaching we learn something we have not yet learnt or try to develop what we have already learnt. There is some distinction made in terms of calling some teachings thought transformation style of teachings while others, like the Lam Rim, are known to be of the style of the stages of the path to enlightenment. It is said that the main difference is that the thought transformation teachings are specifically written to deal with the meditation subjects such as 'give and take' and the meditational technique of 'exchanging self with others'. This category of thought transformation teaching is like a supplement text specifically dealing with the subject such as 'give and take' and the meditational technique of 'exchanging self with others'.

From the title, 'The Wheel of Sharp Weapons', we can understand that the main theme of this text is that the teachings are like a weapon which destroy the enemy, in this case, the self cherishing attitude.

So as we begin to follow this teaching there is a great challenge ahead of us because the main theme of this teaching is to recognise the self cherishing attitude of the mind as an enemy and to destroy it. But we have never even considered that this self cherishing mind that we have as an enemy or as something harmful having many draw-backs. Instead we have always regarded this mind, this attitude, as a treasure and we always try to protect it as much as we can.

We don't immediately think of destroying this self cherishing mind, because in order to destroy it we have to see that it is like an enemy which has a great many disadvantages. So the first thing we have to contemplate on is this self cherishing attitude, and try to understand very clearly exactly what it is doing to us. We can then develop an understanding of its faults and shortcomings.

As an outcome or as an influence of this self cherishing attitude we only want happiness and the best of everything for ourselves. From this many desires arise, and we are ready to commit any action so that we can fulfil these selfish desires. This can motivate us to create many unskillful and negative actions. Also, this attitude encourages us to see all others as unfriendly and hostile towards us. Rather than admiring others when they do well, our self cherishing attitude makes us feel jealous of other people's achievements or possessions, no matter how small.

We cannot tolerate seeing anyone else's victory or happiness. But if we receive harm from others, even if it's a few harsh words, we can't tolerate this and we get angry very easily. Because of this self cherishing attitude we totally disregard others and, in order to fulfil our selfish mind and selfish desires, there is no sense of embarrassment and no sense of restraint in our actions. As long as we think of satisfying our desires then we will never show any consideration of anyone's needs or respect their point of view.

We can see that the never-ending problems that we face in life all come from the self cherishing mind. Even in our daily conversations we have little regard for people who are selfish and are always talking about themselves. No-one would like to befriend such a person. Talking disharmoniously in terms of nation to nation is also caused by this self selfish attitude. And all the causes of conflicts with our friends and family is due to the selfish mind.

With a selfish attitude our mind is fixed - we don't want to take any losses, we always have to win and make gains for ourself. Therefore with this attitude it is impossible to get what we want, because in order to achieve any satisfactory goal we have to compromise our own needs and our own desires. To maintain harmony within the family or with friends it is essential to minimise our selfish desires. It is unacceptable to have someone in the family who is selfish, with a strong self centred mind.

We leave a bad impression on others when we behave out of a selfish mind. Suppose parents had this kind of self centred mind towards their children then the children will never listen to them. The children will have no feeling of love from them. In our life there are many people that we call parents, brothers sisters, partners or children, so in order to live harmoniously with them and to have some mutual benefit, we have to decrease our self cherishing attitude. This means that we have to tolerate them and we have to accept failure from them. By accepting that loss we are in fact making more gains. By showing generosity and tolerance towards them, there will be a better atmosphere within the family, and with all our relationships. We will also receive support from others. So it is most important to practise decreasing the self cherishing attitude, especially towards people we know. We learn to minimise this selfish mind by trying to take any losses ourselves and offer any gains to the others. We offer this from the heart and from the loving thought of their needs.

In short, the more we understand the fault of the self cherishing attitude then the more we understand the benefits or advantages of cultivating the mind of cherishing other beings.

As usual we will chant the Buddha's mantra. So if you could again correct your seating posture and feel comfortable, making sure that your mind is not

wandering outside. As we chant this mantra try to fully focus the mind on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Editor's summary:

- It is recommended that when we are focusing the mind on the meditation object then the focus should not be too tight, because this can bring sleepiness or mental sinking in the meditation. Also if your focus is too loose then you may lose the object or get distracted in the meditation.
- The term 'thought transformation' or 'mind training' in Tibetan is called 'lo jong'. The first syllable 'lo' is mind and 'jong' is the transformation or the training which has the meaning implication 'to learn' or to purify, to get rid of something.
- Thought transformation teachings in the Text are written specifically to deal with the meditation technique of exchanging self with others.
- From the title, 'The Wheel of Sharp Weapons', we can understand that the main theme of this Text is that the teachings are like a weapon which destroy the enemy, in this case, the self cherishing attitude.
- The main theme of this teaching is to recognise the self cherishing attitude of the mind as an enemy and to destroy it.
- The never-ending problems that we face in life all come from the self cherishing mind.
- The more we understand the fault of the self cherishing attitude then the more we understand the benefits or advantages of cultivating the mind of cherishing other beings.