
Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

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First we will do a breathing meditation together.

Choose the right meditation posture, making sure you are relaxed and comfortable.

As well as being able to physically relax, it would be wonderful if our mind could rest and be peaceful. Our mind lacks peace because it always busies itself wandering after external objects. So we try to create some peace within the mind by removing all thoughts of external objects, and bringing the mind fully within.

Having brought the mind inward, without forcing it, gently place the mind on the flow of breath going in and out at the nostrils. Try to maintain the focus of the mind on the breath without being distracted by any other objects.

We are discussing the text called the *Wheel of Sharp Weapons: The Mahayana Training of the Mind*.

In the commentary, it is said that the purpose of this teaching is to strike the enemy. When we say the word 'enemy' we think of outer enemies who harm one's life, one's mind and body, and so on - we classify those beings as our enemies. Likewise, when we look within, we can also find enemies in the form of the self-centred mind. This self-cherishing mind is our enemy because it has been the source of misery and suffering in our lives since beginningless time.

To see further why the self-cherishing mind is our enemy, we have to develop an understanding of its shortcomings and disadvantages.

This teaching is called the *Wheel of Sharp Weapons* because each point it makes strikes at the enemy (the self-cherishing mind) and counteracts it. This text is really about knowing how the self-cherishing mind destroys our peace and that of other beings. It shows how cultivating the mind of cherishing others becomes the source of peace and happiness for ourselves and for all other beings.

The self-cherishing mind referred to in this teaching is not simply an attitude of self-importance; rather it is the attitude that compels us to see ourselves as being above all others. It is an attitude where we don't want to take any losses for ourselves - we rigidly hold onto this attitude of never wanting to take a loss. With this attitude we can never achieve the satisfaction and happiness we seek in our life. Instead, we bring more suffering into our life and create difficult circumstances for others.

With this attitude it is easy to become annoyed, even if one receives only minor harm. Minor external problems become a serious cause of suffering for us, all because of this strong self-cherishing thinking. We may think, with strong hatred: "How dare that person do that to me!" With the self-centred mind we turn ourselves into an unpleasant person in the eyes of others.

On the other hand, having the mind that cherishes other beings allows other people to come closer to us, and become friendlier and kinder to us.

In terms of the actual practice of overcoming the self-cherishing mind by replacing it with the mind of cherishing others, even if we cannot think of cherishing all living beings without discrimination, at least we should try to start the practice by cherishing those who are close to us, such as our companions. We should try to open our heart to them and try develop love, living in a way that benefits them. If we could develop such an attitude of cherishing others by cherishing those who surround us, not only do we gain benefit, but so do others.

When we hear about getting rid of this selfish mind and cultivating instead the mind of cherishing others, we may think that without this selfish egoistic mind, how could we achieve our goals? We get the idea that, if we regard others with love, who is going to take care of our needs?

It is said that if we always think of others and act to benefit them, then all our wishes, what we seek in life, will naturally be obtained. What we seek in life - harmony in our relationships with others, having many good people around us, being loved and admired by others - cannot be obtained while holding the self-cherishing attitude within our mind. The effect of these two attitudes - self-cherishing and cherishing others - is that the self-cherishing mind will turn all others against us, even those who have been our friends in the past, whereas cherishing others can transform them into intimate friends or acquaintances.

If we could cultivate this attitude of cherishing others, whatever we did would reflect our love and compassion toward other beings. The result of such an expression of feelings to others is not only seen in humans - animals also show their appreciation of being cherished and benefited. When animals are shown true love and affection, they show less fear and come closer to people, showing their loving feelings and trust towards us.

By cultivating this mind of cherishing others, we can then utilise whatever potential we have to benefit them. We can actualise it and manifest that potential through our actions.

Whereas by cultivating the self-cherishing mind, even if we have some potential to be of service to other beings, the actions we perform in life cannot bring any benefit to anyone.

If we think it over we realise that in cultivating the mind of cherishing others, or eliminating self-cherishing, we are not going to lose our life's purpose. If we look at our society, we see that two of the many sources of suffering are being lonely or having conflict within relationships. The mind of cherishing others can eliminate these problems.

The self-cherishing mind is the cause of not finding friends, and of being rejected by those you meet. As a result we suffer loneliness. It is also the self-cherishing mind that brings conflict in our relationships with others. With that mind, the relationship cannot be sustained because there is no attitude of

sharing and giving. The self-cherishing mind is seen by the other person as lacking love and care towards them. Therefore it brings disharmony and distance in our relationships.

We can also see that the mind of cherishing others is not only a solution to disharmony in relationships, but is also a source of inspiration. Even if we lose a friend, which sometimes is unavoidable, if we develop this thought of cherishing other beings, our loving and caring attitude prevents us suffering undue loneliness. There will always be people around us who will be happy to share their lives with us.

We leave the teaching here. So as usual we will recite the Buddha's mantra. Sit in a comfortable posture and calm your mind, bringing it inward. As we recite the mantra try to keep your focus on it.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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