

# Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

## A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

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As usual we will begin with five minutes' breathing meditation. Choose a relaxing posture.

By adopting this meditation posture, we find that physically we are calm, relaxed and peaceful. Likewise, we should also try to create a peaceful environment within our minds. What causes the mind to be disturbed and agitated are wandering thoughts, thoughts of external things. To bring peace to the mind, we have to get rid of distracting thoughts and stabilise the mind's focus inward.

After the mind becomes peaceful, instead of being distracted by external objects, we focus on our breathing, making every effort to maintain that focus.

Meditation is all about challenging the mind. We continue this practice until we are able to bring the mind under control. It is a very important practice because, by controlling the mind, we can experience lasting peace and satisfaction. If we know about the benefits, we can see that regular practice is perhaps one of the most beneficial things that we can do.

There is tremendous benefit in pursuing our personal development, in the context of changing our habitual way of thinking. If we search for the right conditions for bringing happiness to our lives, we find that the two most important causes are a healthy mind and body. If our physical health is bad and we experience pain, we can't enjoy life fully. More important than physical health is our mental well-being. Although we may be physically healthy and enjoy good living conditions, if something is worrying us mentally, we can't say we are happy.

So what is the true cause of happiness? It is related to our mental well-being. If we possess positive qualities such as kindness, calmness and contentment, naturally we find life to be peaceful and satisfying. On the contrary, if we don't take any notice of our mind and always let it be influenced by various delusions, we will never find any rest, contentment or sense of achievement. When we approach life in this way, we find that even if we fix one problem, another soon appears. There is no end to our problems. Further, we don't have any tolerance when facing difficult situations.

It is important to be aware of the basic conditions for happiness, and to try to obtain them. We need to be clear about the actual causes of our day to day experience of pain and pleasure. Based on this we then need to find out methods for eliminating the causes of suffering, and obtaining the causes of happiness. Once we know about a fault, we can remove it. At the same time, we cultivate the positive qualities, making our mind peaceful and clear, giving us a correct or direct perception of life.

If we put effort into following this practice, we will naturally make progress in achieving our goals.

Now we will continue our discussion on the mind-transformation text entitled The Wheel of Sharp Weapons.

This teaching contains instructions to cultivate the altruistic motivation of bodhicitta. Bodhicitta is the genuine intention to attain full enlightenment in order to benefit all beings. This teaching specifically tells us the two quintessential instructions to generate this altruistic mind: 1) the sevenfold cause and effect to generate bodhicitta 2) the yoga of exchanging self with others

Of the two, this text is mainly concerned with the second one.

We find that initially the text instructs us to intensify the practice of giving and taking meditation. Through this practice, we cultivate the superior intention of being responsible for freeing all beings from suffering. Once this intention is cultivated, we can cultivate bodhicitta, or the altruistic intention to attain full enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.

From the text we will quote the third verse:

Verse 3

We spend our whole life in the search for enjoyment,  
Yet tremble with fear at the mere thought of pain;  
Thus since we are cowards, we are miserable still.  
But the brave Bodhisattvas accept suffering gladly  
And gain from their courage a true lasting joy.

This verse is about the importance of practicing tolerance and not losing one's courage or spirit. It indicates that happiness can't simply be obtained by wishing for it. As it says - 'we spend our whole life in the search for enjoyment' - it is the wish of all beings to find happiness, yet in real life the happiness we wish for is not always there. Instead, there may be unhappiness or suffering. This is because we haven't made any effort to create the causes to experience the happiness we seek.

The next line says, 'thus since we are cowards, we are miserable still'. This means that we may always wish for happiness, but when confronted by real life situations, we act to create the opposite. For example, we may be so emotionally unstable and vulnerable to outer influences, that if we make some small profit or victory, we quickly become overjoyed. But if we face a small problem or loss, we lose courage and just as quickly become unhappy and disappointed. Therefore, there is no lasting happiness or peace in our life.

What we can learn from this is that, when we face

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difficulties - the cause of which may be not having enough qualifications, or wealth, or friends - whatever the cause, it is important to not lose the courage to overcome these problems. In other words, this teaching indicates that we have to learn to accept the problems we face and be courageous, reducing the problem and making it not so hard to face. On the contrary, if we lose courage and generate hate toward our problems that we must live with, then the problem can turn into a very difficult situation for us. The reason that the situation can become so difficult is because of our lack of tolerance in dealing with the initial problem.

This verse says that the root cause of problems is the selfish attitude, whereas all happiness is derived from the mind that cherishes the welfare of other beings. Why we, as ordinary beings, are weak in accepting problems is because of this selfish attitude about our own welfare.

Whereas, as it says, 'but the brave Bodhisattvas accept suffering gladly and gain from their courage a true lasting joy'. This says that Bodhisattvas are brave in the sense of a broad mind and attitude - they think of the needs of all others, rather than narrowing their thoughts to their own self. Because of this broad attitude, not only are Bodhisattvas capable of accepting suffering, but as a result of that acceptance their life is filled with happiness and joy - in their immediate and future lives, they go from happiness to happiness.

If we think of two people facing the same situation, how they cope with the situation depends on their mind. If their mind has a broad outlook and can accept any situation courageously, then there is no difficulty. But if we lose our courage and say we can't handle it, we are lost.

As the famous Indian Buddhist master Asvaghosa said, whenever we start any activities with a goal in mind, as soon as we face an obstacle and lose courage, we would give up and not achieve our goal. But if we encourage and prepare ourselves to face obstacles with self-determination and high spirits, we can achieve our goals.

That's all for the teaching tonight. We will now recite the Buddha's mantra. Please make yourself comfortable in the sitting posture and try to relax your body and calm the mind. As we begin the chanting, focus the mind on the sound of the mantra.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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