
Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

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Let us do some breathing meditation first. Choose a comfortable sitting posture and feel that the body is at rest.

When we sit in the meditation posture we have control and are physically disciplined. With this posture we can be certain that all physically negative or unskillful actions are stopped. This sitting posture is peaceful and relaxing and gives a good impression to others. As well as disciplining our body, we also must discipline our mind. This involves taming and controlling it, rather than allowing it to be distracted by thoughts of external objects.

We do breathing meditation with the intention of calming the mind: to stop the mind from wandering after objects by directing it on the incoming and outgoing breath.

The most important spiritual practice is one that can bring a positive transformation to our actions of body, speech and mind. The reason we follow a spiritual path, or do meditation practice, is to effect a positive change in our actions. All the unwanted experiences in our life are due to the negative actions that we create through our body, speech and mind.

As we are all seeking goodness in life, to cause that goodness to happen we need to transform our daily actions of body, speech and mind into something good and positive. In doing this, we can see that our primary focus should be on our mind. If we can tame our mind and if we have less distractions and negative thoughts, then we will naturally find peace within our mind. Our actions of body and speech will also become a source of peace for others.

We should always direct our spiritual practice to making our daily actions of body, speech and mind more positive. We practise meditation to safeguard our good qualities and our existing good nature, and also to cultivate and increase these qualities. If our conduct is positive this will reflect our good human nature and in turn we will find that our life will be stable and more peaceful, and others will find us easy to live and work with.

If this is not the case, and our actions are negative, then we will find even more suffering and loneliness.

We shall now continue the commentary on the text of *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*.

In the last talk we finished discussing Verse 4 and in that verse we saw the difference between brave Bodhisattvas and selfish people. Brave Bodhisattvas are like the peacocks, who become stronger by living on poisonous plants. Even if Bodhisattvas live in the 'jungle' of suffering, the desire that is poison for selfish

people nourishes the Bodhisattvas. This verse likens selfish people to greedy crows who rely on desire and then end up suffering.

Verse 5 continues:

How can someone who cherishes self more than others
Take lust and such dangerous poison for food?
If they try like a crow to use other delusions,
They will probably forfeit their chance for release

The meaning of this verse is quite self-explanatory. It is showing which type of being can transform desire as a means of benefiting others. As the verse says, the brave Bodhisattvas are like peacocks, and the selfish are likened to crows. Because they have no self-cherishing mind, the brave Bodhisattvas can make good use of desire in terms of helping others.

Just as peacocks are strengthened, rather than harmed, by eating poisonous plants, Bodhisattvas are strengthened, rather than harmed, through the use of desire to fulfil their wish, which is utilising their life to benefit other beings. However, if a selfish person is influenced by desire, then not only do they effect great harm in their life, but this desire also can be an obstacle to them achieving liberation - just as the crow dies when eating the poisonous plant.

This verse is also talking about the disadvantages of the self-cherishing mind, and the advantages of cherishing other beings. As mentioned before, with a self-cherishing mind there are always desires, and satisfaction is never found. These desires continually bring problems in life, for example, in our relationships with others. Because a Bodhisattva's mind is free from selfish concern, the consequences of generating desire is not the same as it is for a selfish person. Bodhisattvas achieve satisfaction and fulfil their wishes by benefiting others. Because of their selfless mind, desire will not bring any harm into their lives.

However, in the case of a selfish person, desire will kill the chance of gaining liberation from cyclic existence. This is because, as we give way to desire, we become so engrossed with this sensual world that we never have any intention to go beyond cyclic existence, or to achieve liberation. Without the aspiration to liberation, there can be no renunciation, and therefore no hope of liberation. If the ordinary being does not remove desire, it will spiral into even more desire. Because of our attachment our desire will produce further desire. If we do not remove desire, we will have no hope of finding any satisfaction, let alone achieving liberation.

Desire is powerful and it can deceive our mind. Desire can sometimes give us the urge to achieve something

that is totally beyond our reach. But then, no matter what we desire, our mind seems to find the object of our desire very pleasant and a very useful thing to have. Desire produces a wrong view in our mind. It consumes all of our energy, and if the desire is not fulfilled then we feel completely restless and mentally distracted. Desire burns out all interest in other activities; we feel bored going to work, staying home, or going anywhere.

Desire has so much power - it can reduce our self-confidence and make us feel unimportant. So it is important to prevent desire from arising. We should try at least to not let desire rule our life or our belief in ourselves.

It is important to investigate desire closely, to explore whether the way we see things through desire reflects the truth, or whether we just see of the object of desire through our false perceptions.

We will find that desire influences us to see the object as not only very attractive and beautiful but also as a source of enjoyment and pleasure in our lives.

It is said that it is very difficult to see anything wrong with desire, unless we look deeply and thoroughly into desire and its projections on the object. If we can't see anything wrong with desire, then we will start to believe in our desires. Even if we can't fully establish that desire is just a delusion, we should at least be cautious and understand that what is appealing to us is not completely realistic. It is beneficial if we can think in this cautious way, and then at least part of the mind is not overpowered by desire.

We will finish this discourse by reciting the Buddha's mantra. As in the beginning, find yourself a relaxing posture. Then just bring the mind inward by removing all distracting thoughts and focus the mind on the mantra as we chant.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

*Transcribed from the tapes by Gaye Radcliffe
Transcription checked by Mark Emerson
Edited by Cynthia Karena
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