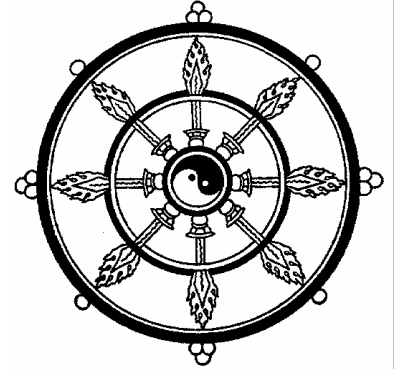


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

ཕྱུ་སྐྱུང་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



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As usual, we will first do some breathing meditation. Choose a meditation sitting posture and relax your body. We have to remove all mental distractions because, with mental distractions, we cannot focus our mind on the meditation object. The causes of mental distractions are sensual objects - pleasant, unpleasant, attractive, or unattractive visual objects - sounds, smells, or tastes. Before beginning the actual meditation, we have to make sure that, just as the body is at rest, our mind is resting within. This means removing all distracting thoughts of sensual objects.

After bringing your mind inward, generate the motivation to focus the mind on the meditation object, which here is the inhaling and exhaling of your breath. Apart from your breath, don't let any other object occupy your mind. With the strong intention to maintain single-pointed concentration throughout the meditation period, we now begin the meditation by focusing the mind on our breath.

Training or working with our mind every day can greatly benefit our life. It makes a great difference during the day if, when you first wake up every morning, you are aware of your mind, and make sure you have a positive attitude. If there is anything disturbing or uneasy in your mind, try to overcome it by doing meditation practice, to make sure your mind is clear-thinking and peaceful. If we have pure, clear thinking and a happy state of mind it is, of course, very beneficial. If you have such a good state of mind in the morning, you will see it makes a difference to the rest of the day. You 'll see that the positive energy you generated in the morning is sustained.

On the other hand, if we don't discipline our minds, we may have negative tendencies that can be a continuous source of problems. As we said, if we start to discipline the mind when we get up every morning, we can achieve a good frame of mind. If we don't do something, it is possible that something in the mind that bothers us may arise at the same time every day. If we don't act, it can create continuous problems.

If an action proves truly beneficial, truly useful, we must resolve to try to do that action regularly, throughout a whole lifetime, because it will bear a good result. So, in continuing our practice of training the mind, we must never feel discouraged because of facing difficulties in our practice. If we are consistent with our practice, eventually we will see the result - our mind will become calmer and more balanced. It is said that the mind is like

a gutter along which water will flow well if the gutter is level. In other words if, through mind training, your mind is balanced and fully stabilised, it is not hard to focus your mind on any object or topic you wish.

We will now resume the teaching on the text called *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons* by the Indian Buddhist master Dharmarakshita.

Verse 16

When we are parted from friends and from those who can help us,
This is the Wheel of Sharp Weapons returning
Full circle upon us from wrongs we have done.
Till now we have taken the friends and good servants
Of others away, wanting them for ourselves;
Hereafter let's never cause close friends to part.

This advice is for those suffering separation from close friends who have been kind and helpful. Here we are also reminded of the various types of social contacts. There are those we call our close friends - close in the sense that they are intimate and near to one's heart. It is not necessarily the case that such intimate friends are always truly helpful, because there are some who can appear helpful but in fact can do us harm without us realising. You can also think of others with whom you don't feel such a connection - there is no intimacy there - yet who benefit or support your life.

In this verse, we are talking about those who are not just close to our heart, but are also truly kind, truly helpful to us. So we are referring to the kind of suffering we undergo if we are separated from such people. If you think about this not only in your own life, but in the lives of everyone in the world, it is correct to say that most people at some time undergo this suffering. So, this verse contains spiritual instructions for everyone to practice when they undergo the suffering of separation from close friends.

It says here that "this is the Wheel of Sharp Weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done." This indicates there's a karmic cause of undergoing this suffering of separation. Instead of feeling sad and depressed, we should focus our mind on something else. Here it says that we should focus on the cause of the sadness or suffering. From the point of view of the law of karma, we have created the cause in this life or in a past life - we did something to disrupt the relationship between a teacher and his or her students, or between close friends, or between a master and servant.

So the suffering of loss of friends that we undergo now indicates that, in the past, we have brought about separation between others - taking away their students, servants, or friends for ourselves. This also includes actions whereby you tried to convert others who followed religious traditions other than your own. The cause of our suffering is not just actions we did in past lives. If we think in terms of this life, we may have stolen someone else's friend, or stolen students from another teacher. Our actions brought conflict and problems to others' lives. We must realise that the type of suffering we have caused others - separating them from their friends - has now fallen upon us. If we understand our situation in this way, we can resolve to never repeat the actions which can cause disharmony in relationships between others.

It is also beneficial to meditate on the impermanence of all things. When you are separated or have lost a friend, if you do not accept this change, it can cause further misery. It is important to realise that everything is subject to change, it is the way of nature. In the same way, think that any relationship is uncertain, that it could always change from friend to enemy and vice a versa. We can contemplate the saying that the end of any meeting is parting. In his advice to lay people, the famous Tibetan master, Padma Senge, asked them the point of families fighting or quarrelling, when it is just a matter of time before all the family members will be separated. Thus, rather than always fixing our mind on problems and suffering, it is important to have a different way of thinking, and to bring a different light on our situation.

We will finish the teaching here and chant the Buddha's mantra. Again sit in the meditation posture, relaxing the body and bringing the mind inward, and focus the mind on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

*Transcribed from the tapes by Jenny Brooks
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