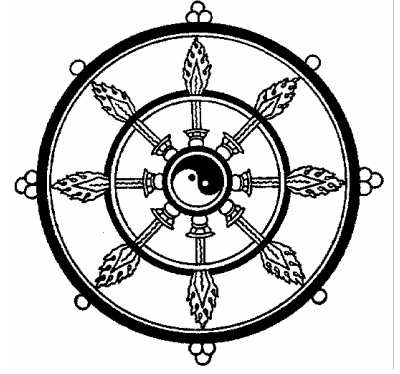


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

འཇིགས་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



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We will do some breathing meditation first. Choose a comfortable sitting posture and make sure that your body is fully relaxed. Direct the mind inward by removing all distracting outer thoughts. Feel your mind at rest within. Without letting it wander off outside, focus your mind on the inhaling and exhaling of the breath. Focus is maintained by not being distracted by external objects.

After having done this breathing meditation for awhile, start to imagine the outgoing breath as darkish smoke, representing all the things that cause pain to your body and bring unhappiness to your mind. All the deluded states of mind and their causes all go out with the breath. With the incoming breath imagine that you are receiving a spiritual blessing or some sort of positive energy from all the Buddha's and highly evolved beings. Think that these blessings fill your entire body and remove all the faults of both mind and body making them completely pure. With a sense of happiness and joy, imagine that your body becomes pure and clear as crystal. Incorporating this visualisation with the breathing meditation is said to be an effective means for purifying and enhancing inner peace and joy.

To continue the teaching on the text "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons", we are now at Verse 17:

Verse 17

When supreme Holy Gurus find us displeasing
This is the Wheel of Sharp Weapons returning full
circle upon us from wrongs we have done.
Till now we have turned from the gurus and
teachings preferring the counsel of misleading
friends,
Hereafter let's end our dependant relations with those
who would turn us away from the path.

This is an instruction on how to prevent the wrong view or any disrespect from developing towards holy gurus, holy beings or any spiritual friends. In English the word 'holy' has many levels of meaning, but in the line 'when Supreme Holy Gurus find us displeasing', 'holy' means virtuous or wholesome (and unholy means non-virtuous).

Your spiritual teachers inspire you to do the right and virtuous actions. When you have a problem in your relationship with your spiritual teacher it is easy to lose your faith at this time and even develop a wrong view or perverted view towards your own spiritual teacher.

Before letting such a negative view arise, we have to understand that this usually occurs in a situation where we have found it difficult to be fully inspired by our teacher. Or you might find that no matter what you do it seems that your spiritual teacher is displeased. You need to think about why this is happening. When you understand why, the cause will become clear and then there will be no reason to show disrespect towards your spiritual teacher. As it says: "This is the Wheel of Sharp Weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done."

We need to understand that we may never have even met our spiritual master in the past. Even if we had some contact we may not have fully followed their instructions or advice. In the past we have probably relied more on bad friends, the type of people who want to lead others into non-virtuous or unwholesome actions. The problems that we now confront in our relationship with the spiritual teacher or friend are due to the negative actions we have performed in the past as a result of being influenced by our bad friends, rather than listening and following our spiritual teacher.

When we face this problem, rather than following a wrong view, or showing disrespect to the spiritual teacher, we have to point the finger at ourselves. Only then will we see that the truth of what is happening now is all due to our wrong actions from the past.

It says "Hereafter let's end our dependant relations with those who would turn us away from the path". Here it is literally saying that we should abandon bad friends and not be influenced by them. But this does not mean we should not think about them or that we shouldn't love them or even that we should completely reject them. The point is that we should not be influenced by them and their wrong advice and habits.

Make friends with a good person and see them as a role model, a good example to follow. But don't befriend or mix with bad friends and hold them up as an example to follow. We need to give thought to the skill of making friends. Any person we choose to be friends with is not going to be perfect; they will have some faults as well as good qualities. It is important to see this when making friends, so that you learn from and pick up only their good qualities. Otherwise you will also pick up their bad habits which will be difficult to correct and overcome later on, for example, their drinking or smoking habits. The friend may not have made this a pre-condition, but if

you spend a lot of time with that person you may want to do similar activities so that you have something in common.

Thinking realistically about what is good for you, it is well known that habits of smoking and excessive alcohol are bad for your health as well as your wallet. A good friend will not get angry and will understand the choice you have made to not join them for a smoke or a drink. It just shows a lack of understanding by your friend if they do get angry. A good friendship doesn't mean doing everything your friend says.

In general we have to take responsibility for ourselves. Even if we have friends, we are still responsible for our own physical well being and responsible for our own life. We don't know how long the friendship will last, and furthermore, we risk losing our own health and good qualities of life if we follow the wrong advice of a friend.

We need look no further than the many examples of teenagers from good families who are influenced by their bad friends and get into all sorts of trouble. The parents are the good friends and their advice truly benefits their children. But if the teenagers would rather choose to listen to the advice of their bad friends, then as a result their life could become a great mess and they could have great problems.

So it is important to carry with you great wisdom, intellect and a discerning mind. With this mind you are always aware of yourself and there is always a sense of self-responsibility. You always consider whether the results of your actions are beneficial or harmful, now and in the future. Always examine what is harmful and what is beneficial to you. Using this knowledge is the best way to guide yourself through life.

We'll stop the teaching here. Again, sit in the meditation posture and try to feel the body relax and feel the mind come inside. Chant the Buddha's mantra and focus our mind on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

Editor's Summary:

- Focus in meditation is maintained by not being distracted by external objects.
- Any problems we may have with our spiritual teacher or spiritual friend are due to being influenced by bad friends from the past, instead of listening to the spiritual teacher.
- We don't need to stop loving or completely reject our bad friends, we just should not be influenced by them or hold them up as good role models.
- Making friends is a skill: realise that no-one is perfect. Make friends with a good person, use them as a role model and pick up only their good qualities.
- We have to take responsibility for our own life.
- Consider the immediate and long-term beneficial and harmful effects of your actions. Using this

knowledge is the best way to guide yourself through life.

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