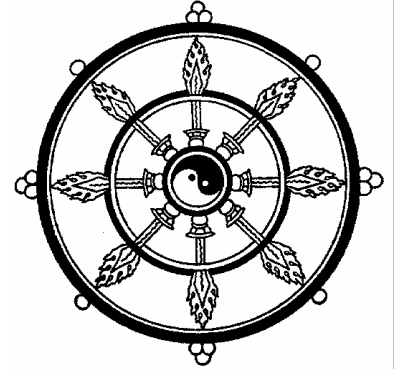


# Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

ཨོ སྒྲིབ་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



5 November 1997

We will do some breathing meditation first. Choose a comfortable sitting posture and make sure that your body is at rest. Cultivate the intention of not letting the mind be overpowered by the afflicted states of mind of ignorance, desire and hatred. We are doing this meditation to rest the mind and let it be at peace. Try to prevent your mind from running after objects that bring on, or arouse, afflicted states of mind. The mind will then stabilise and rest inwardly. The mind is back home, so try to keep the mind within for a short while. Instead of letting the mind slip away to the outer objects of distraction, direct the mind to your breath as you inhale and exhale through the nostrils. Whenever we practice meditation our goal is always to put the mind at rest. Its for this reason, that meditation has a lot of benefit for us.

We will now continue the teaching on 'The Wheel of Sharp Weapons', Verse 26:

When we suffer from sickness and such interference,  
Especially when gout has swollen our legs,  
This is the wheel of sharp weapons returning  
Full circle upon us from wrongs we have done.  
Till now without shame and with no self-control  
We have stolen or misused what others have given;  
Hereafter let's never take anything offered  
To the three jewels of refuge as if it were ours.

This verse is an instruction that can help us in our thinking when we face problems like chronic disease and obstacles that threaten one's life. Due to the intensity of such problems we not only have to deal with the physical obstacles, but mentally we can also become extremely agitated. This verse is advising us on how we can overcome these problems in our minds. If we can deal with the mental problems, then at least we can sustain some happiness and hope. We can do this by adopting the right way of thinking and developing more inner strength.

We are inflicted with a chronic disease without choice. We lose our physical strength and capacity for physical pleasure. But we can also lose our mental pleasures and happiness if our thinking becomes narrow-minded. When we lose heart, our mental suffering can be worse than our physical pain. We have no control over our disease, but we do create, and control, our own mental suffering. We can choose to have high hopes and be of good spirits in our minds. Shantideva says that if there is a solution to one's problem then we should find it and stop worrying, but if there is no solution to the problem then, he asks, why should we worry about it?

Remembering this advice can give us the inspiration to face our problems and the mental strength to accept them.

It is also helpful to understand one's situation from the karmic perspective of cause and effect. We are facing the outcome of our own past actions. For example, our physical pain or disease can be the result of our past actions of stealing from others, or our past action of misusing others' belongings without any consideration that the things we enjoy belong to others. The problems that we face are the result of our own actions. We should at least be mentally encouraged to accept and endure our physical problems. Meditation practices that can be applied here include the practice of giving and taking. In this way, this problem can be transformed into a means to further develop our spiritual qualities, our compassion.

We can also understand this through the example of the relationship between a patient and a nurse. No matter what type of disease or level of pain a patient is undergoing, it is much easier if the patient enjoys a good relationship with his or her nurse. It is also a lot easier for the nurse to look after the patient. In a patient/nurse relationship like this we can see that some mutual understanding, respect and consideration is at work.

If there is a bad relationship between the nurse and patient, despite the nurse giving good care, the patient can't appreciate the nurse's efforts, he or she would be unhappy and could even feel angry whenever the nurse does good things. Some patients are angry and short-tempered because of their physical pain and the frustration that comes from not recovering. Under these circumstances they also become mentally vulnerable and it is easy for them to lose control. When the same nurse gives the same level of care and service to another patient with the same disease, there may be a different response. When there is harmony between the nurse and patient, then this benefits them both. If there is no harmony, when the patient doesn't like the nurse and the nurse only serves the patient out of duty, then it can be difficult for both of them.

Developing more understanding of each other can solve the problems in the relationship. For example, if the nurse understood the patient more, then, when the patient always complains or even hits the nurse then he or she can still show tolerance, with an awareness that this discomfort is nothing compared to what the patient is going through. Being tolerant and patient actually

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helps to make the nurse's work easier. If the nurse has the problem of a short temper on top of the physical demands of the work, then emotional or mental problems will result. A different way of thinking can make a great difference.

This thinking also accords with the general common good manners of people. Most people regard as rude, for example, just helping yourself whenever you see any food or drink, or taking an empty seat for yourself without thinking of others. It is also a spiritual practice to always seek permission from others when using something that doesn't belong to us, whether it is food, drink, a chair or whatever. We are instructed in this verse not to use what does not belong to us. If we use holy objects without consent, then the negativity is even more serious.

Spiritual practice relates to all of our actions, and shows us the correct and most beneficial way of thinking to find a true understanding of a situation. From this, all other qualities - like tolerance and patience and the purification of your own negativities - will come naturally. As said before, when we nurse a bedridden person and understand their situation, then we can feel great sympathy for the patient. It is easy to be tolerant of impatient people when we understand their discomforts and loss of freedom. If a nurse believes in the spiritual path, then he or she will understand that there is no better opportunity to give whole hearted service to the patient. This is the best opportunity to develop spiritual qualities and serve others with kindness.

With a spiritual understanding it is possible to serve and benefit others in return for the harm we receive from them. Some high spiritual practitioners can integrate such a practice to benefit others.

We finish the teaching here and we will chant the Buddha's mantra. As before, we can sit in a meditation posture, withdraw the mind from all distracting thoughts and focus on the mantra.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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*Edited by Cynthia Kareena*

*Edit checked against the tapes by Richard Garward*

*Edited Version*

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