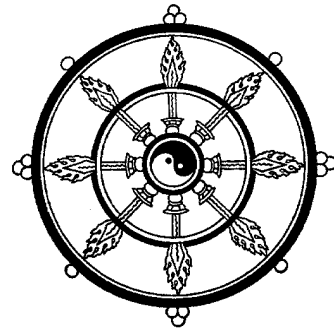


Dharmarakshita's " *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons* "

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

ཨོ ལྷོ་ལྷོ་མཚོ་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



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We will do some breathing meditation together. Choose a comfortable meditation posture, making sure that every part of your body is fully relaxed.

We need to achieve peace in our minds, otherwise physical rest will not be of much use. To achieve inner peace we need to put our minds into a state of rest. Any emotional problems we experience are caused by our minds wandering after various objects, never resting and always busy thinking of something. We can only truly experience rest and happiness when both our mind and body are rested and peaceful. We achieve this mental rest by first removing all distracting and wandering thoughts until our mind is inwardly stabilised. We then direct the focus of the mind to the incoming and outgoing breath; single-pointedly, without being influenced by thoughts of any other objects.

One's mind is the cause of many unnecessary problems, so it needs to be controlled, otherwise it will always dream and go after things we don't have. So we need to consider whether we can realistically achieve our dreams or whether they are just wishful thinking. If we don't do this, we will feel unfulfilled, frustrated and discontented. We need to stop the mind from fantasising and instead direct it towards the good conditions we enjoy in our lives. Sometimes we need to remind ourselves of the positive things we have in life. This way of thinking has more benefit for us.

In general, the most important possessions for people are their own minds and their own bodies. Whatever we desire in life, whatever we want to achieve, all depends on our mind and body. We should see them as our best friends. If they are healthy - a healthy body and a clear calm mind - then not only are we happier but this also makes it easier for us to achieve our goals. It is also important to have a sense of personal responsibility for achieving the things that are important to us. We must realise that we have to make those things happen and that we ourselves should shoulder the main responsibility for achieving our goals. If we approach meditation from a position of personal responsibility, and a realisation that both a healthy mind and a healthy body are important, then we will reap some benefit from meditation practice.

To continue the commentary on *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*:

Verse 27

When strokes and diseases strike without warning,
This is the wheel of sharp weapons returning
Full circle upon us from wrongs we have done.
Till now we have broken our vowed words of
honour;
Hereafter let's shun such non-virtuous deeds.

This verse is a guide for our minds when we are infected with infectious diseases. Geshe Doga remembers, for example, how most of the monks in his house got sick with fever and headaches associated with an infectious disease when they moved from the cold climate in Eastern Tibet to the warmer weather of Lhasa in Central Tibet. Fortunately Geshe Doga didn't contract the disease and the others couldn't understand why. Of course some precautions can be taken from one's own side, to avoid common infections like tuberculosis, but there are circumstances where a disease just spreads to many people.

It is easy to blame the person who infected us with the disease, but actually, as it says in this verse, it is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle from wrong actions we have committed in the past, either in this or past lives. In this context, the verse refers specifically to the negative actions of breaking our spiritual pledges or commitments that we have taken. We should keep our spiritual vows and moral practices and resolve not to break them. We should further resolve to show a good heart and loving kindness towards others and, in this way, further safeguard the commitments we have taken.

If we only consider external causes for contracting a disease, then we will feel that it is someone else's fault- we may even feel that they deserve to be beaten up or punished in some way. But we need to consider internal causes. For example, Geshe-la didn't get the infectious disease that all the other monks in his house did, so contracting the disease can't be totally dependent on outer causes. We can think of many examples where infectious diseases spread but not everyone gets infected. Even if all the external conditions are there to become infected with the disease, no one will contract the disease if there are no internal causes present as well. In Buddhist terms, this internal cause is our own karma. Karma explains why some people don't contract a disease and others do. People can't contract a disease when they don't possess the karmic conditions to do so.

When we talk of karmic conditions we talk of our own actions. To prevent contracting a disease in the future we have to refrain from committing non-virtuous actions, like killing, stealing or sexual misconduct. The verse is advising us to practise virtuous and wholesome actions by refraining from unwholesome or non-virtuous actions. The result will be less suffering in our lives, less suffering from disease.

The best way to perform virtuous actions is to think about what actions we personally like and don't like. We can then use this as a yardstick by which to treat others.

For example, the reason we refrain from killing other beings is because we can understand that our life is precious to us and that, likewise, the life of other beings is important to them. By understanding how our own material possessions are important to us, we can think about how to treat others' possessions. Another example in applying the same principles to others is by understanding how we feel hurt and upset when another person has an affair with our partner, so we refrain from sexual misconduct because this behaviour will hurt others. In this way, when our actions are based on our own experience, we will be trying to do the right thing by others. Then, even when our actions aren't especially helpful or beneficial to others, at least they won't be a cause of harm.

So we will leave tonight's teaching here and as usual we will chant the Shakyamuni Buddha's mantra. Prepare yourself for the chanting by sitting in the meditation posture. Relax your body and your mind by calming all distracting thoughts, and then direct your attention to the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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