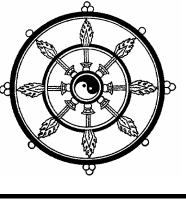
Dharmarakshita's "*The* Wheel *of* Sharp Weapons" A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga Translated by Samdup Tsering



## 19 November 1997

As usual we will begin with a short breathing meditation together. Choose a correct sitting posture, making sure that your body is fully relaxed and that the back of the body is straight.

Just as we physically take a rest, we also need to rest the mind. We can do this by getting rid of all outgoing thoughts. Without controlling our thoughts, our minds tend to wander after all kinds of external objects, and we tend to fill our minds with all kinds of thoughts. Our uncontrolled thought processes bring unnecessary objects to the mind, which then bring unnecessary disturbance and unease into our minds. These uncontrolled thought processes are like an old wound activating unwanted thoughts. We cannot enjoy inner peace if the mind is not controlled. Keep this in mind as we sit in a relaxed sitting posture, and get rid of all distracting thoughts and stabilise the mind inward.

Now direct the mind onto the meditation object, which in this case is the inhaling and exhaling of the breath. It is important that your mind is fully focussed on the incoming and outgoing breath, and not distracted by any other objects or thoughts.

The most important thing for each person is to enjoy abundant peace and joy in the mind. It doesn't matter how much we try to plan our life or what we try to pursue in life, the most essential thing is peace and happiness in our minds. The main cause enhancing inner peace and happiness is minimising and overcoming distracting and disturbing thoughts in our minds.

The famous Indian master Shantideva said that of all the means to bring happiness the supreme one is to control one's mind. There are many ways to make our minds happy. We can talk about material ways and spiritual ways. The happiness that we find through material means depends upon the material object, an external object, and the duration of the happiness depends on the material object itself. As soon as we lose the object, our happiness also disappears. Like a rainbow it is gone. The happiness doesn't last and it isn't reliable. And there is also not much control from our side.

However, when we talk of the happiness that we can find or experience through meditation, which controls and disciplines the mind, this happiness doesn't depend on external objects and their causes. The happiness we find from meditation is the result of our own effort, as well as by knowing our own mind and our own positive and negative qualities. Based on our discriminating knowledge, we can engage in meditations where we can gain control over our minds, resulting in some mental peace and happiness. We can always find this happiness, regardless of our external conditions. We can find meaning and satisfaction in life – it comes from within.

One night after teachings, an Indian student approached Geshe Doga and asked him why he always seemed jovial and happy. Geshe Doga replied it was because he lost his country and that he left all his family and friends. Her initial response was shock; she couldn't understand how Geshe Doga's answer related to her question. But after she thought about it for a while, she understood that Geshe Doga was saying that having no attachment brings more satisfaction and more happiness to the mind.

To continue the commentary *on 'The Wheel of Sharp Weapons'*, Verse 28:

When our minds become clouded whenever we study. This is the wheel of sharp weapons returning Full circle upon us from wrongs we have done, Till now we have thought that the study of Dharma Lacks prime importance and could be ignored; Hereafter let's build up the habits of wisdom To hear and to think about what Buddha taught.

The first line, 'When our mind becomes clouded whenever we study', refers to all the times that we have put a great deal of effort into studying and practising the Dharma and are still not making any progress. For example, we might listen to the Dharma and the words don't sink in, and when they do, we can't work out what the words mean. And then, if we meditate on the words, we don't get any realisations. We can also think of examples where children from the same parents are sent to the same schools, but one can't learn as well as the other, is always behind and can't focus his or her mind.

The second line, 'This is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done', is telling us to understand that this is the result of actions we have created in a past life. Rather than performing wholesome actions in the past, we have primarily performed unwholesome or anti-Dharma actions. We can't make any progress in our study and practice of the Dharma because we have underestimated the value of Dharma teachings in the past and have put more value on non-Dharma activities.

So the next line advises us to 'Hereafter let's build up the habits of wisdom to hear and to think about what Buddha taught'. We should now resolve to study and practise the Dharma more seriously in this lifetime. Otherwise, in future lifetimes we will face the same difficulties and obstacles when we approach the study and practice of Dharma. We shouldn't be discouraged from learning and we shouldn't give up when we find difficulties or problems in learning. Instead, we should try to find the main obstacle to our learning process and then try to remove it.

Always think of the advantages of developing our knowledge and learning, whether in terms of a worldly education or a spiritual one. Both bring great benefits to our lives. We can see that worldly knowledge has the benefit of improving or securing better living conditions for us. That's why Geshe Doga always encourages people, especially young people, to acquire as much education and skills as is possible for them. Geshe Doga also advises them not to waste their time, but to always keep busy, whether it is with study or with work. The more education, skills and work that you do when you are young means that later on in life you become more secure, in terms of material needs and in finding a job. We need to realise, or admit to ourselves, that material comforts also contribute to great happiness in our lives. So we need to work and put in some effort towards this.

Nevertheless, we shouldn't forget that material objects can't guarantee us happiness. It is also important to develop our spiritual knowledge- the knowledge of our own minds and one's own self, and the knowledge of how we can progress to create more inner causes of happiness. Spiritual learning is important. Without spiritual knowledge there is a danger that our good material conditions could bring less, rather than more, comfort to our lives. They can be a condition for more afflictive emotions and delusions in our minds. Even if we enjoy the best of circumstances, still there may be no end to suffering. Spiritual knowledge can help us to prevent afflictive emotions from arising out of our indulgence in good material conditions.

Spiritual knowledge is the supreme wealth. It is not like material wealth, where we worry about storing it, whether it will be stolen, and so on. Spiritual knowledge is also likened to a supreme companion who never fails us when we are poor or weak.

Our first practice should be hearing, learning, or studying teachings. Then, contemplate those teachings and think about their meaning over and over again, until full understanding of the teachings is gained. True spiritual realisations can result from meditations born of a comprehensive understanding of the teachings.

We will now chant the Buddha's mantra. Again, sit in the meditation posture and just relax the body and the mind. As we begin chanting the mantra we should focus the mind on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

Transcribed from the tapes by Jenny Brooks Edited by Cynthia Kareena Edit checked against the tapes by Richard Garward