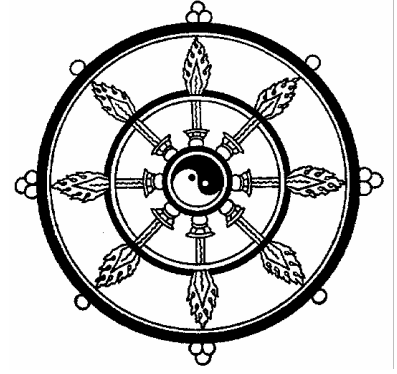


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

འདྲེན་སྐྱོད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



3 June 1998

First, we are going to do some breathing meditation. Relax your body by removing all tension, and sit in a comfortable meditation posture.

If the mind is wandering outwards after distracting objects, let it rest within. Then focus your attention on the incoming and outgoing breath.

As a result of following meditation practice, we realise that the mind can be brought under our control. When you come to this realisation, you can gain some confidence that your mind need not always overrule you and do only as it likes.

We have to investigate whether there is any gap between what is in our minds and our capabilities. This is important to be aware of because the mind may wish for all sorts of things. If we do not check whether the ideas or desires in our mind are realistic and attainable, and keep these ideas in the mind year after year with no result or success as far as fulfilling the idea goes, it can bring frustration and a sense of hopelessness. Feeling that you are hopeless and can't achieve anything, you become discouraged. The cause of feeling discouraged is not curbing these thoughts in the mind.

We have a lot of potential within our minds. For this self-potential to be creative, beneficial and useful, we have to consolidate it into one direction. If the mind is distracted or influenced by objects of distraction, our mental potential is not focused on a particular object and this affects our ability to accomplish things. Because of our distracted mind, when we decide to do something we soon lose interest in it and think of doing something else, making it hard to achieve anything. If we try to direct whatever potential we have within the mind and all the resources we have - all our energies, knowledge and skills - towards one specific aim which we really want to achieve, it is easy for us to achieve the goal.

We are now going to discuss the text, *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*. Verse 35 reads:

When we lack all control over where we must travel
And always must wander like waifs with no home,
This is the wheel of sharp weapons returning
Full circle upon us from wrongs we have done.
Till now we have disturbed holy gurus and others
And forced them to move from their homes or their
seats;
Hereafter let's never cause others disturbance
By evicting them cruelly from where they reside.

This verse cites situations where people are forced to leave their homes. This is like the return of the wheel of

sharp weapons in the sense that it is the result of their past actions of forcing or evicting other beings from their homes: it illustrates karmic cause and effect.

Knowing that everything we experience is the result of our past karma helps us overcome difficulties or problems, and motivates us to create the right actions. As pointed out here, people who have been removed forcefully from their home undergo great suffering; they cannot accept that somebody has taken away their right to live in their own place.

Imagine this situation happening to two types of person - one who has some conviction in the law of karma, and the other who doesn't have such a belief. When they face the same situation, if the person who has conviction in the law of karma reminds himself about karma, this knowledge can lessen the suffering in his mind. He or she understands the situation to be the result of actions in the past - that perhaps he or she was once a powerful person who misused power to abuse others or evict others from their homes. Knowing they have created the cause, they don't completely blame those who have thrown them out, and they don't feel hatred towards them. Because they don't feel hatred, the peace in their minds is not disturbed, even confronting a situation in which they have lost something valuable.

Now think of the other type of person. They have been evicted, they have no choice and are completely helpless, so they suffer greatly. They feel great resentment and hatred towards the person responsible, adding more suffering to their minds.

We can also see here that any person with power or influence over other people should not misuse their power. It is not right for them to exploit ordinary people because it creates the cause for them to face the same problem in the future. People with power should realise that along with their high position they have some duty of social responsibility. With such a sense of responsibility, their power can be beneficial to many others.

There have even been cases in monasteries where bad monks have been banished from the order. The reason is the same as for a school - a student who is a bad influence on other students and has the potential to cause harm to other students can be expelled. The consideration here is for the larger group. So if your motivation is that you can do whatever you like because you have some power, any action performed with such motivation is wrong. The practice of the law of karma or

cause and effect is realising that if we create good actions the results will be good, but if we create bad actions the results will be bad. Understanding this, we try to be honest and not engage in unwholesome or non-virtuous actions.

The knowledge of the law of karma should be possessed by all people, at all levels, in all walks of life. If people in high positions - such as the leaders of a country - have this conviction in the law of karma, they can be more responsible for their actions. They won't take advantage of their position, privilege and knowledge for their own benefit or, worse, bring problems to others. With faith in the law of karma, they would know that they have a wonderful opportunity to be of service to many others; with a sense of responsibility any action they perform would benefit many others. Likewise, we have to think of developing such conviction in the law of cause and effect, and try to base our actions of body, speech and mind on this conviction.

Even if we are not a person in a high position, we can think of how important it would be not to misuse our power if we were in such a position. This is creating the cause for not misusing our power in a future life if we become a leader or a minister. So even now we can create good causes for our future benefit. If we understand the law of karma in the right way, it broadens our mind. It is wrong to think the law of karma means that everything we encounter - for instance, if somebody hits us with a stick on the head - is because of past karma and there is nothing we can do about it. If we take it that way, it can narrow our thinking and make us think that we don't have to do anything. But that is wrong. Rather, by understanding the law of karma, we see that we must be more responsible for what we say and do to others.

On the other hand, if we check why we make so many mistakes in our actions of body, speech and mind, and why we lack motivation to accumulate more positive actions, it is because our conviction in the law of karma is not strong enough, and this, in turn, is because we are not practising the law of karma enough.

We can therefore see how the practice of karma is a fundamental spiritual practice. Without it, there is no way to improve ourselves.

Geshe Doga says that he used to tell friends that he thought the reason people choose a temple or church for their wedding ceremony is more than tradition- it is in the hope that such a marriage will last longer. When you conduct the ceremony in a temple or church, it is a sacred place, a place of prayer, and both partners can take their vow in the presence of their god, of holy objects, of parents and relatives and all those who are close to them. But later if the marriage breaks down, in a way they have broken their vow to those holy objects and special people who were present on the wedding day. This shows their lack of faith in holy objects, because if they had strong faith in the holy object or the god, whatever the situation they would not easily break the vow because they know it would be a cause of displeasure to the holy objects. So practising the law of karma can encourage us to maintain

our marriage vows. Geshe Doga says this is just his own opinion, that a marriage breakup shows a weakness of faith in holy objects.

Even in safeguarding the celibate vows, the two main factors are shame and embarrassment. When you have these two, you safeguard this vow for the reason that you have taken it from your spiritual teacher or from the preceptors. Breaking this vow is seen as shameful and embarrassing because of your faith in the teacher.

We finish the teaching here and we will chant the Buddha's mantra. First prepare oneself with the meditation posture, calm the mind inwardly and, as we begin this chanting, focus the mind on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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