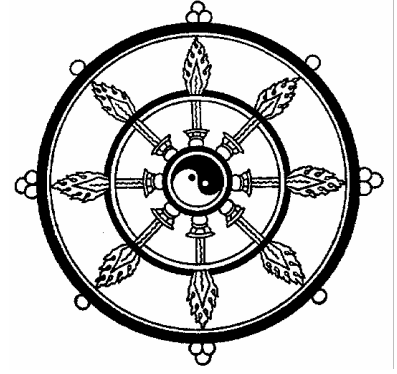


# Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

ཨྲ སྤྱི་ལོ་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



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First we will do some breathing meditation together. Adopt the meditation posture and make sure that the body is fully relaxed.

Everybody wants to be a good person, wants only to do the right thing, yet we aren't always acting in the right way. So, why can't we be what we want to be and do the right things? The driving cause is our undisciplined and restless state of mind. Unless we overrule this unruly mind, we cannot really bring about a positive transformation in our lives. Try to see that the meditation we do is fixing our restless state of mind.

Cultivate the motivation to control and subdue this agitated mind, and by doing so, we will bring about more inner mental stability and then develop increased clarity and increased concentration within the mind. It is important to try to have this strong motivation before starting to meditate. It is the strong intention to combat the unruly mind, the mind that we have no control over most of the time, the mind that is always influenced by distracting thoughts. The motivation should have the determination to not let the mind wander as it pleases. So try to cultivate this motivation. First see clearly the purpose of the meditation, then start the actual meditation by getting rid of all the outgoing thoughts, letting the mind relax and rest inwardly. Then do the breathing meditation by directing the mind to the incoming and outgoing breath. You will find that doing this meditation, just a little, but regularly, will be most beneficial.

Now we will continue with the commentary on the text, "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons". We are up to verse 36:

When the crops in our fields are continually plagued  
By drought, floods and hailstones, insects and frost,  
This is the wheel of sharp weapons returning  
Full circle upon us from wrongs we have done.  
'Till now we have failed to honor our pledges;  
Hereafter let's keep all our moral vows pure.

This verse is particularly relevant to farmers, as they undergo a great deal of suffering when they lose their crops. If in such hard times they can integrate this kind of spiritual teaching or dharma into their practice or situation, it can help them- in the sense, at least of not making the situation worse for themselves by worrying about their problems. Generally speaking we can see that people have different levels of difficulty in coping with situations. Some people can cope with situations where, even where there is a great deal of hardship, they can face that quite comfortably. Others can't even cope

with minor difficulties, finding them extremely difficult.

But whatever the problem, worrying about it is not going to help solve the problem any quicker. So it is important to understand this when facing problems and difficulties in life. Of course these problems are unwanted and undesirable, but worrying about them is negative, even harmful. Mentally worrying, constantly worrying about one's problems can become a further source of suffering in our lives. It can also become the main obstacle to actually finding a solution. Worrying about a problem constricts us. We can't achieve anything because we don't feel like doing anything. Continually worrying can affect our mental health. Not only do we feel unhappy, but we can also lose our clear thinking and our self-confidence. We become discouraged - all because of the worry in our minds.

We need to check whether there are any real reasons for us to be worried. This is important, because there are many instances where people worry to the point where it becomes so serious that they lose their self-confidence and self-esteem, and become frightened. When we check out the reasons for worrying, often we can see that it is completely avoidable and totally unnecessary. All this worry is just in the mind, all this "if this happens, then this will happen...".

For example, someone who fell off his bike came to see Geshe Doga. He had some pain in his shoulder, but he wasn't worried about the shoulder, but about a possible broken hand which would mean that he couldn't go to work and support himself. But he hadn't checked to see if it was really broken. Another example is of a person who is very personally disturbed about possible drought creating a shortage of food in Australia, worried that he or she wouldn't have enough food. Geshe Doga said in reply that if this happened, it wouldn't just happen to you; it would be everyone's experience, everybody would be short of food.

We need to check whether the worry in our minds is worth being concerned about. If it is just based on your suspicious mind, then it is insecure and we have to get rid of it as it could harm our thinking. If we have a serious worry in our minds, then it is very hard to do anything constructive. We can't concentrate and we can't think properly.

In order to confront a problem, we need to minimise worry. Otherwise it will become another obstacle in solving the problem. We need to direct our energies towards solving the problem, rather than worrying about

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it. Once we have an idea of how to solve the problem, then we have to take action. We can't act if we are burdened by worries. Direct the mind ahead, onto the action needed. Without worrying, we will have better concentration, better thinking power and more enthusiasm to solve the problem.

So this advice to the farmer- who has faith in the teachings- who loses his or her crop due to natural calamities, will help to make them feel happier and not as worried. In Tibet there are some farmers who seem even happier when their crops fail, saying that losing their crop means that they don't have to do any work that year!

We need help at that time in our lives when we face problems. A spiritual practitioner should be able to reduce these problems through spiritual practice. Otherwise, if our practice doesn't help at that time, we might ask, "What is the point of spiritual practice?" Whether we have the support of spiritual guidance or not, we usually live our lives in happiness. But there's always a time when we face some problems and worldly people can normally do nothing but complain, they just whinge, especially when they can't overcome their problems quickly. Spiritual people should instead realise, like the farmer, that problems are not without a cause.

The loss of ones whole crop or harvest is not without cause:

This is the Wheel of Sharp Weapons returning  
Full circle upon us from wrongs we have done.  
'Til now we have failed to honor our pledges;  
Hereafter let's keep all our moral vows pure.

Try to see that actions in the past, where we have broken our pledges or commitments to our gurus or spiritual teachers, can bear their result on our environment rather than upon ourselves personally. This is the ripening of our own past immoral actions. So we can see it is important to keep our pledges, our moral vows and bonds with spiritual teachers.

The verse says to hereafter keep all of our moral vows pure. Moral vows can be understood on two levels - the spiritual and the worldly. The spiritual perspective is talking about keeping our spiritual bond or pledge with our guru or spiritual teacher, as well as keeping all the vows we have taken pure. From the worldly perspective, these bonds are the bonds we have established with those close to us. Like the bonds between student and teacher, parents and children, or partners. So we have to show these people some moral respect, and minimise telling lies. Keeping these close bonds brings harmony to our relationships. This has to benefit ourselves and all others concerned.

It would be difficult if there was no harmony in the family, or between student and teacher. Where there is harmony, these close relationships bring some joy and peace to the minds of everybody concerned. For example, a good relationship between the teacher and students makes the classroom environment peaceful and enjoyable, and, since the students find the teacher

special, they will pay attention. If there is no harmony, it doesn't matter how polite the teacher is, the student will find it unpleasant and probably not even listen.

So, we need to create a harmonious environment wherever we are living. Think of what can be done to bring the harmony that is needed to bring people closer to us.

We will now recite seven rounds of the Buddha Shakyamuni mantra. Just try to sit in the meditation posture and bring the mind inward and just focus on the mantra.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

Geshela says he just remembered a time in 1959, when Tibetans were escaping to India, that one Geshe Kacheg, who was taking several of his students with him on the journey, was worried that they would starve before or after they got to India. Who would give them food? Another Geshe said, "Geshla, don't worry. We're going to a place where there will be other people so surely we will get some food." The Geshe thought that this was just the right advice. He thanked him, and he found this advice to be very true. As soon as they arrived at the border of India, food was already there for all the new refugees. What the other Geshe said was true- the food that most of the Indian people ate was rice and dahl, so this is what they got!

*Transcribed from the tapes by Jenny Brooks*

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