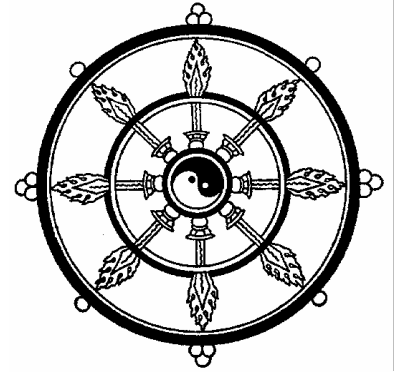


# Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

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ཕྱི་སྤྱོད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



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First we will do some breathing meditation. So just sit in a relaxing posture. Our minds should also relax at the same time. We do this by removing all distracting thoughts and let the mind just sit inwardly. After we calm the mind from all the external distractions, and we are holding it within, we need an object for the mind to focus on. We will use the breath. We can now start the breathing meditation by directing the mind to the outgoing and incoming breath; without being distracted by any external objects.

We will now continue our discussion of the thought transformation text, the 'Wheel of Sharp Weapons'. Verse 37 reads:

When we are poor, yet are filled with much greed and desire,  
This is the wheel of sharp weapons returning  
Full circle upon us from wrongs we have done.  
'Till now we have been misers, reluctant to share,  
The offerings we have made to the Three Jewels were meagre,  
Hereafter let's give with a generous heart.

This verse is giving us spiritual advice for when we are suffering due to a shortage of wealth and possessions. The problem isn't that we don't have enough possessions, but rather our strong desire for wealth and possessions. And no matter what actions we undertake, in running a business for example, or any hardships we endure in order to create wealth, they never work.

We can mentally suffer a lot because of our frustration at being poor. The verse here is saying that under such circumstances we shouldn't worry or agonise over the problems, instead we should try to gain a clearer perspective on our situation. We are in this situation because we have not practiced generosity towards others who are in need or made offerings to holy objects such as the three jewels. The situation also indicates that the little wealth we did acquire, we hung onto with a miserly mind instead of giving it away to the poor. Try to recognise that the true cause of our lack of wealth and possessions is our lack of the practice of generosity and lack of making offerings. We need to use our wealth and possessions meaningfully. The verse says not to feel so miserly about our wealth that we don't even use it to improve our own standard of living, like buying food and clothes.

Now there are some people who actually believe that being miserly is an important factor in becoming rich and having more possessions. They believe in hoarding their

possessions and they try to gather more and more. The question that remains, however, is what purpose is there in having wealth and possessions if we don't use them ourselves or share them with others? There are many people who are rich, but for them, their wealth and possessions become a great burden in their lives. Because they have these possessions, they always worry about them. Their possessions and wealth directly cause them to suffer. If they used their possessions and wealth wisely in a meaningful way, then their possessions would become the source of more comfort and luxury, peace and satisfaction. And further, many others who aren't wealthy will benefit from these actions.

The verse is telling us that if we do have some wealth, we have to understand that it is to be used to benefit our lives, even just to enjoy better food and better clothes. That's fine, that is the purpose of having wealth. On top of this it is also important for us to think of how we can help others with our wealth. If helping people in a distant land is difficult, then try to think about how to share the wealth so it can benefit others close to us. In addition, all spiritual traditions believe in the worthiness of making offerings to holy objects, of becoming, say, a benefactor of a religious school. So if we do these things, then our wealth and possessions will not only improve our lives, but we will also increase our merit due to the practice of generosity and making offerings. And this becomes the cause of gaining wealth and success in the future.

We know of people who have started businesses with the same amount of capital and put in the same amount of effort, yet it turns out that some are successful and make a profit while others lose their money, even their initial capital. We tend to say that this is unfortunate or unlucky. Buddhists understand this as 'Karma'. Some people do not have the karma to gain wealth. The karma that we accumulate through the practice of generosity and making offerings will result in future wealth. The karma that results in poverty and failure in material pursuits is the karma that we accumulate through our action of miserliness.

Another implication of the verse for us is to minimise or check our mind of desire, because this mind has no end of wanting more and more. If we don't calm down this desirous mind, then no matter how many possessions we have or how wealthy we are, we still won't be satisfied. Then we cannot rest, and we have to run around keeping ourselves busy. Imagine if this was our life - never

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feeling content, always having the thought to want more and more. It would be impossible then to find any peace and satisfaction in our lives, even if we were well off and comfortable.

We need to appreciate what we have. More material pursuits add more problems to our lives. Some people say that when they had one shop everything was fine, but as soon as they open another one they experience problems in their lives. There must be a point where we say to ourselves that rest, happiness and satisfaction are more important than the accumulation of wealth just for the sake of having more. Of course, the problems and difficulties associated with material wealth are more to do with not being content with the wealth that we do have. So how do we make ourselves content with our possessions and wealth? We need always to appreciate what we have achieved in life, especially the good living conditions that living in a well-developed country brings. We can appreciate our living conditions by comparing them to other parts of the world where, for example, many thousands of people are starving to death. We should think positively of our own situation, and think of how lucky we are to find ourselves in such good living conditions.

With a contented mind, if we find more wealth due to our own efforts, we can feel more content, more satisfied. We should see our wealth and good conditions as giving us the resources to find peace and happiness for ourselves in this life, and as giving us the opportunity to help others. We will also make a lot of merit by supporting spiritual practitioners like Sangha communities. There are many things we can do to help others, but the most important things are to cultivate the thought of helping others and thoughts of generosity. So, with these thoughts we can help each other through sharing our wealth and giving charity to the poor. Cultivating benevolent thoughts can bring a great deal of peace, harmony of happiness in society. So there are plenty of ways to help others. For example, if a friend is feeling down, we can take them out for tea or a meal, or just give some of our time and listen to their problems, or even materially help them out. Even a small thing can be very helpful to others.

It is essential to have less desire because desire never gets satisfied. There's not much to explain here, we only have to check our own experience to see this to be true. And wealth and possessions should be serving us, not the other way around. We shouldn't be enslaved by wealth and possessions. There are many rich people here in Australia, including some Tibetans. When they are honest with themselves, they say that they had more happiness in their minds when they didn't have as much money. So, judging by people's experiences, they sincerely seem to have enjoyed more mental peace when they didn't have wealth. So, this shows us that there is something to this talk about inner peace and happiness. Outer wealth can sometimes be an obstruction to that inner peace. Thinking in this way can help control the wanting for more and more things.

We also need to consider that whatever the level of the

condition we live in, we should try to find happiness in it and enjoy ourselves. Some may think that happiness is dependent upon more possessions, the possession of some other something, but in the mean time, we have forgotten to appreciate the happiness we've already found. Many farmers in Tibet who have a good harvest buy new clothes and spend more time going on outings and picnics and enjoying themselves. But when they have a bad harvest, they will cut the budget and the family will wear their old clothes and will be content with what they have. So, it's good to learn how to enjoy ourselves more when we can afford to, but then when we can't afford to, we should accept and enjoy a more simple form of life.

Now if you can just try to relax again and sit in the meditation posture. Then, with a calm mind, recite the mantra and use it as an object to focus on.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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