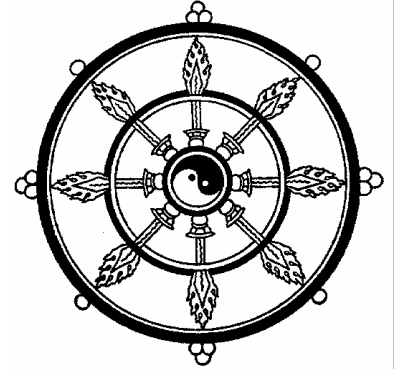


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

ཨྱ ལྷོ་སྤྱོད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



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Choose a comfortable and relaxing sitting posture. One of the benefits of sitting in this meditation posture is that we can be sure that physically at least we will refrain from committing any non-virtuous actions of body or speech.

However, we are here mainly to find mental peace and happiness. This can only be achieved by calming our minds. The mind is the source of all our actions, so if we can achieve some control over our minds, we can cultivate some positive qualities. Then some positive transformation of the mind can occur, bringing some positive transformation to our actions of speech and body. Finding peace and tranquility in our surroundings is not enough, we need our minds to be at peace if we want to be truly happy.

This is all to do with understanding our own minds better, and, thereby, to bring about inner peace and happiness. Keeping this in mind when doing the meditation practice, we try to generate the motivation to understand our own minds. Before starting the breathing meditation, it is important that our minds are residing within us and stabilised. Empty the mind of all thought, any thoughts of past, present or future objects. We may have a thought that is busily occupied with some beautiful object, or even occupied with an unpleasant object. We need to get rid of all such thoughts. When our mind isn't distracted any more, then we can bring the mind inward and put our minds at rest. So before we begin the breathing meditation we can feel at least some short moment of inner peace and stability.

The breathing meditation just focuses our mind on the in breath and the out breath, and nothing but the breath. Make some effort to prevent any other objects distracting the mind from the breath. The more we meditate the more clarity and peace our mind will enjoy. Peace and happiness is something we can experience within ourselves, as something expressed from the inside out, rather than something we chase externally.

What we need to do is to change our view of happiness and what causes satisfaction. If our view is based on some external condition, then it will be very hard to find lasting and stable happiness. When we look to external objects to bring us happiness, we eventually want something different. For example, when we first meet someone new we are excited and enjoy their company, but then when we have spent some more time with them we tend to lose interest and our mind wanders and tends to think about another person that can satisfy us. It's like

the person has become too old and outdated, no longer able to satisfy us or bring us any enjoyment.

It is very difficult if we just rely on external conditions to give us a satisfying life, a satisfied mind. It is impossible to find lasting happiness. We can be happy if, instead of relying on external conditions to satisfy us, we can think within ourselves and achieve some sort of stable view of life. In this way we can still be contented, even if one's friend is old or we still find the old conditions surrounding us.

Continuing the teaching on the thought transformation text called 'The Wheel of Sharp Weapons' we are up to verse 46:

In short then, whenever unfortunate sufferings
We haven't desired crash upon us like thunder,
This is the same as the smith who had taken
His life with a sword he had fashioned himself .
Our suffering is the wheel of sharp weapons
returning
Full circle upon us from wrongs we have done.
Hereafter let's always have care and awareness
Never to act in non-virtuous ways.

This verse is an instruction that can help us make any hardship that we face in our life acceptable and endurable, without losing hope, courage or determination. This applies to all people, whether or not they believe in spiritual teachings, whether they're rich or poor. We are each in the same situation of not being able to get all the things we want. And on top of not being able to fulfil all of our desires, we also have to confront unwanted problems and difficulties in our lives. We need something in these times of frustration and problems, even if we don't believe in spiritual teachings. It is important that we have enough strength in ourselves to cope with such situations, because we don't want the problem to depress us and lower our spirits, causing us to lose our hope and our aspirations.

However, the instructions offered here mainly advise how spiritual practitioners should cope with problems. Our difficult situations are the result of our own past karma, that is, actions that we have done in the past (in either this life or in past lives). We need to try to view our situations from the point of view of karma - the law of cause and effect. We can then maintain our hopes and aspirations, despite all the difficulties we face. The verse also instructs us to undertake the meditation of giving and taking as a technique to enhance love and compassion towards others.

Even if you aren't a believer of spiritual teachings and you don't believe in the law of karma, you still need to consider a way of thinking about problems that can make you a more positive and stronger person, able to endure the hardship without losing determination and hope. We have to realise that sometimes problems are unavoidable. Even if we are rich, or have many friends or are highly educated, we can't avoid some problems. Sometimes we even get things we don't want.

The key question here is whether the problem is going to get better if we just feel sorry for ourselves and get depressed. Is this behaviour going to fulfill any of our expectations, or get rid of the problem? If we let ourselves down by thinking that we can't handle the situation, then we will lose our spirit and our courage. We will soon become lazy and lose interest in rectifying the problem. If the problem is enormous, this simply means that we must generate more strength and courage. As the popular saying goes: 'where there is hope, there is a way'. So no matter how enormous our problems, we have to endure without losing courage, hope or determination. Not only will we be able to cope with the problem far better, but it's also very likely that we will actually overcome the problem.

As the last two lines of the verse say:

Hereafter let's always have care and awareness
Never to act in non-virtuous ways.

We are trying to learn something from the problems that we face. Of course we feel miserable, frustrated and depressed when we have obstacles facing us and we can't achieve our goals. But we need to try to understand why we can't achieve the goal, and why there are obstacles in our path.

The lesson to be learnt is that not only are we, ourselves, experiencing the problems that unavoidably come into our lives, but so are all other beings. Everyone has the same problem; they all experience unhappiness when they don't fulfill their goals, just as you feel unhappy when your goal isn't reached. All sentient beings are the same in that they all want happiness and want to avoid suffering. This is universal and applies to all beings.

So we can use our own experiences of suffering to develop love and compassion towards others. Through understanding our own feelings of suffering, we can be more understanding of others' situations. We are instructed in this verse to create virtuous or wholesome actions. We need to try and help support others in what they want and not to harm them or be the cause of any obstacles. Rather than being the cause of people's problems, we need to provide help in reducing their problems. The best way to begin this practice of helping others, is to first start with the people closest to us, our friends, partners and so forth. For them, we try to be helpful and not cause any harm.

If someone supported us, we would be pleased with that person. Likewise, we will please others if we benefit them. We are delighted when we achieve success; likewise we should feel happy when we see others enjoy some success in their lives. If they achieve their desired

goals, we should rejoice, rather than be irritated and have negative feelings of jealousy. Parts of the instructions in this verse refer to jealousy and how it is an obstacle to our own spiritual development as well as being the cause for our unhappiness. So we need to listen to the instructions and overcome any jealous feelings.

We have to take into account which way of thinking is more beneficial for us – the worldly way of thinking or the spiritual way of thinking. According to the worldly way of thinking, if your enemy is having a problem, then it is a cause for celebration, and if the enemy is winning in some area of their lives, then it is a cause of our displeasure. According to the spiritual way of thinking, you shouldn't feel good if someone you hate undergoes suffering, nor should we feel bad if they enjoy some success.

We have to check which attitude brings more peace and happiness to our lives. If we don't consider this carefully, we won't appreciate in which way it can benefit us to enjoy the success of our enemies; nor will we see the benefit of refusing to enjoy his misfortune. We have to think, in terms of our own peace and happiness, which is the better way, the worldly or the spiritual.

As we begin the chanting of the mantra, draw your minds inward and make sure that there is no distracting thought in the mind. Focus the mind on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

*Transcribed from the tapes by Jenny Brooks
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Edited Version*

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