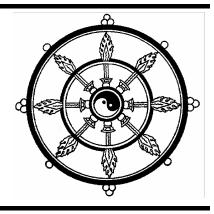
Dharmarakshita's "*The* Wheel *of* Sharp Weapons" A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga Translated by Samdup Tsering

৩৩ ব্রাঁশ্র্রান্যমার্কনিরান্তাদেশ্বিমার্শ্বো



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As usual, let us first do some breathing meditation together. Make sure that your body is fully relaxed, and keep the back of the body straight. The aim of sitting in this meditation posture is to bring inner peace and happiness to the mind.

What prevents us having inner peace are external distractions in the mind. Your mind naturally finds peace when there are no thoughts, distractions, or external objects to disturb it. When the mind is filled with distractions, you feel that it is not with you; rather, you feel as if it is scattered, and has no energy, focus or strength.

On the other hand, if we bring the mind inward by withdrawing our mental attention from external objects, your mind has more capacity to think and focus. Keeping this in mind, we begin this meditation, trying to remove all external objects of distraction, and letting the mind dwell inwardly.

Having brought the mind inward, we gently focus it on the in-breath and out-breath, making every effort to stop any distracting thoughts from arising.

It's good to find time to practise meditation, because meditation benefits us by calming the mind. The best time to do meditation is in the early morning, when we begin the day. If we do some practice in the morning and achieve some calmness within the mind, it has a positive effect on our attitude and actions throughout the whole day.

The actual practice of meditation involves applying mindfulness and alertness to the object or subject which, through your wisdom, you have found to be beneficial. No matter what sort of meditation you practise, it initially involves you acquiring knowledge, and then trying to live your life in accordance with that true knowledge, trying to stabilise it by continuously applying mindfulness to recall your wisdom knowledge.

While mindfulness helps you remember the object of your meditation, alertness helps you ensure that there are no other hindrances to your meditation practice.

Now we are going to continue discussing the text, *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*. We are up to Verse 46, which reads:

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 a 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 mainly about knowing the true cause of all the suffering we undergo – now, in the past, and in future.

If we think of our past and present life, we can see that we have gone through an unending cycle of suffering and misery. From the Buddhist perspective, if you consider what you might have been in your past life, you might have been born in an unfortunate realm. This verse specifically says that if, in the past, you underwent the suffering of being born in, for example, an animal realm, the source of that suffering has not yet finished, because you are still finding suffering after being born as a human being. Think of the many types of severe suffering and pain that exist in this human world. Therefore, it is important to realise not just how much we hate this suffering, but how to minimise it, and even how to completely free ourselves of it. The only way to get anywhere is to recognise the true cause of our sufferings which, according to the Buddhist teachings, can be understood from the point of view of the law of karma or causation.

We have to be very clear in our minds that whatever type of suffering and dissatisfaction we find in life, it must have a cause. Then – through understanding the cause and effect of our own karma, which means the actions we create through our three doors of body, speech and mind – it will be impossible to experience suffering.

If we do not consider the true cause of suffering, then whenever we face suffering, the only thing we can do is to put up with it. We become confused and frustrated, wondering why we continually have to face suffering in our lives. When we finish suffering one thing, there is some other source of suffering. It is even worse when we misunderstand the cause of suffering – through this then we can create more causes for future suffering. There is some sort of relief when we understand that the main cause of the suffering we experience in our lives is our own actions.

There is a story like the similie in this verse about an archer who invented his own arrow, poisoned at the tip. Whoever was struck by this arrow would be fatally wounded. But when the archer shot the arrow, instead of striking the other, it rebounded back and killed him. This is saying that we each create the causes of the suffering and dissatisfaction we face through our wrong verbal,

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

physical and mental actions, such as killing other beings, lying and holding ill thoughts towards others.

The benefit of contemplating our suffering and its true cause is that we actually gain some conviction that our own karmic actions are the true cause – we can clearly point the finger at the harm we have given others, which cause our problems and suffering. This understanding gives new direction to our lives, encouraging us to as much as possible abandon negative actions like causing harm to other beings. On the other hand, we are also inspired to undertake virtuous actions that benefit other beings. The practice of adopting virtuous actions and abandoning non-virtuous ones can bring more happiness to and remove suffering from our lives.

As Shantideva, the renowned Indian master, says, we should also understand that suffering has the potential to bring positive benefits. Suffering can teach us how to be more caring, sympathetic and compassionate towards others. It also teaches us to renounce this suffering existence, samsara, by teaching us to do right actions and not to do wrong actions.

What we are learning here is how our everyday actions are the source of our experience. If we perform positive, wholesome actions, they can benefit ourselves and others. If, however, our everyday actions are negative and unwholesome, they can bring harm to our lives, and to the lives of other beings. The message is that in our practice of karma, we should be honest with ourselves, and honest and fair with other beings. We should not just totally ignore our own behaviour, and always blame, criticise or find fault with other beings' actions of body, speech and mind. You have the same faults in yourself. For example, if we do something undesirable to someone else, because of which they say or do something undesirable to us, and we only complain to others, it is obvious that we are not being honest. In practising the teaching of karma, or cause and effect, we have to be honest.

This teaching of karma also gives us a positive way of thinking about problems. As a benefit, even if our outer circumstances are painful or undesirable, we can make sure that we don't mentally suffer too much, and feel completely hopeless. If we do not have a positive way of thinking, our mind can make adverse circumstance seem worse than they are. As said before, we are continuously creating actions, we cannot stop creating them. The doors through which we create those actions are body, speech and mind. You know your body is not your self, and neither is your speech and mind, but if the actions of your body speech and mind are undesirable or disgusting, suddenly we appear to others as a bad person. If we lie or cheat others, they see us as being unreliable and untrustworthy. On the other hand, if your actions are honest and friendly, these show you to be a good, warm-hearted person.

We will leave the teaching here and chant the Buddha's mantra seven times. Now if you could sit again in the meditation posture and make yourself comfortable and relaxed, bring the mind inward and try to focus. As we begin the chanting, please focus the mind on the mantra. Transcribed from the tapes by Nancy Patton Edited by Mary-Lou Considine Edit checked against the tapes by Richard Garward Edited Version © Tara Institute