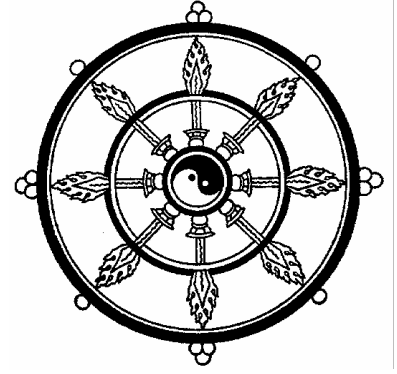


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

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2 December 1998

First let's do some breathing meditation together. Make sure that your body is fully at rest. Along with physical rest, our mind is also at rest; then we feel ourselves truly at rest. But resting ourselves physically doesn't rest our mind. So what stops the mind from resting? The main cause is the mental distractions that make our mind wander off into the outside world. Our mind cannot be at peace if wandering thoughts distract it. With this in mind, try to put the mind at rest by removing all outgoing thoughts. Let the mind stabilise and dwell within itself. Having brought the mind inward by stopping all outgoing thoughts, then we can begin the breathing meditation.

In the breathing meditation we direct all our mental attention to the in breath and the out breath, just at the nostrils. Our focus or concentration on the breath should be such that the mind is actually absorbed into the breath, so there is no gap between your mind and the breath, they become one. These meditations are beneficial because through meditation we can bring inner peace and clarity to the mind. Through meditation we can clear out and remove our mental obscurations, or our veil of conceptual thought. This then allows the light of wisdom knowledge to shine in our minds. The mind then becomes very clear and very pure. This is when we experience some form of mental peace and happiness.

Continuing the commentary on the *Wheel of Sharp Weapons*. We are up to verse 49 which reads:

As it is true what I have said about self-centred
interest
I recognise clearly my enemy now
I recognise clearly the bandit who plunders
The liar who lures by pretending he is part of me
Oh what relief that I have conquered this doubt.

So this verse sums up what has been said previously about these many downfalls - the fault of the self-cherishing attitude or this self-centred mind. There is no mention in the teachings of any positive qualities of a self-cherishing mind. Having met these teachings through the kindness of a spiritual friend or a spiritual teacher, we have now truly recognised as an enemy the self-cherishing mind.

We only find out that the self-cherishing mind is the enemy when we study some spiritual teachings. Understanding this requires some consideration of why the self-cherishing mind is the enemy. Otherwise we cannot learn and we cannot see this, because everything we do in our daily lives is based on this self-cherishing

mind. We are always thinking of our own needs and interests. As long as our interests are met, there is no concern for others. Of course our needs and our happiness are important. The question is how we can best fulfill our interests to maximise our happiness and minimise our problems in life.

The text is saying that if we have a strong self-cherishing mind, then this is a hindrance to fulfilling our own needs and interests. We cannot achieve happiness for ourselves with the self-cherishing mind residing in the depths of our hearts. This attitude results in frustration and continuous, unresolved problems in our lives. But we can trace the cause of these problems to the self-cherishing mind. For example, if there is disharmony or dispute in our relationships, like between parents and children or with friends, then this is caused by the self-cherishing mind. On the other hand, if we can diminish this self-cherishing attitude, then we will find the relationships get better and there is more happiness in our lives.

Because it is important to find happiness in our lives, it is important to have a broad understanding of the situation. Without much understanding our minds become fixed and rigid, believing we are perfect faultless beings. Our self-centred mind doesn't let us accept the good advice we receive from our friends, parents and spiritual teachers. So it is important to understand that just as we desire happiness and do not want to suffer, so does everyone else. We can only cultivate such attitudes when we overcome this self-cherishing mind.

We should try to understand the harm that a self-cherishing mind can bring to our lives, and in the lives of others, including our close friends. To best understand the fault of the self-cherishing mind we need to think about how to relate it to our own lives. For example, a self-cherishing mind can be the cause of a relationship breakdown with our parents, children, partners or other close friends with whom we have spent many happy years in the same house eating and drinking together, and generally sharing good times. If we have a self-cherishing mind, then we won't be able to tolerate any minor abusive words or minor complaint from even our closest friends.

The self-cherishing mind will take this very seriously and in that moment we forget all about the good side of the relationship. We forget the kindness and help we have received from others. We become very intolerant towards even minor harm we have received from them.

If we don't calm our minds, our hatred will grow and grow, as if pouring nourishing water over a seed of hatred- to the extent that we will lose the friendship.

If we think about it, the main cause of all this is our self-centred mind. We lose our temper and we get angry very quickly. The self-cherishing mind can destroy all the harmony we enjoy in our families. It doesn't take into consideration the many years of families living happily together, supporting each other and taking care of each other's needs. Let's say that later on one of the parents, instead of being content with family life is thinking of another person. Their mind is not at home. It is outside, and therefore can be a cause of unhappiness, disturbing the family and disturbing their own life. All the happiness and harmony that existed before, the good relationships that existed before – all gone.

Has the person got a better life now with the new person? Probably not. There is more confusion and more problems. The person has lost the previous relationship and lost the previous good life. There is also confusion in the mind about whether this new relationship will last or not. Instead of thinking about yourself, focus more on your own family and put them first. Content your life with sharing with your family. In this way you will find less chaos, less confusion and less problems in life.

We need to establish the benefit of the practice of cherishing other people more than cherishing ourselves. We don't need to think of future lives, we can see the benefit in this very lifetime. We have to see the benefit and see that if we sincerely put that into practice, then we will see that we will achieve more happiness and satisfaction in life.

Until we die we have to live our lives in this world depending upon other people. So we can't just be thinking about ourselves and ignore the needs of others. Even if we have a strong self-centred mind, we still need the support of other people. We may hold the attitude that we are independent and self-sufficient, but in reality, if we are caught in some problem, then we expect someone to come and help us. And then we complain when we don't receive any help from others and that we always have to support ourselves. When people do support us, however, we do appreciate it and our minds becomes joyful.

Think of cause and effect. If your attitude towards others doesn't change, i.e. you don't think of their needs and interests, then they won't think of your needs and interests. If you don't show respect for them, they won't show any to you. The people that we see who have no trouble getting help from others and no trouble making friends, is because their attitude is one of showing consideration towards others. So we are advised to show respect to others with the hope that they will show us respect, to help others in the hope that they may help us.

We don't have to think about receiving a reward for our actions, as we will naturally reap rewards through this law of cause and effect. If you are good to others, usually they will respond in the same way. So we should adopt this kind of attitude, thinking about others, and

train our mind to devote our lives to serving others. Having these attitudes will naturally mean that you will enjoy harmonious relationships with others, and there will be more happiness in your life due to all the warm friendship, care and help you receive from others.

We will finish the teaching here and now chant the Buddha's mantra seven times. Once again, try to relax your body and make sure there are no outer distractions in your mind, and the mind is dwelling within. As we chant the mantra we focus the mind on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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