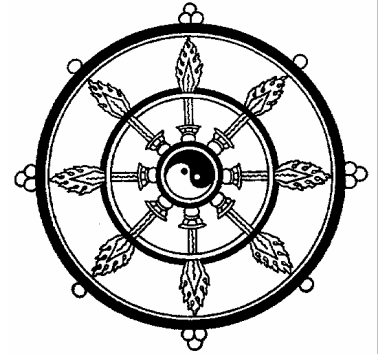


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

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We will begin with a few minutes breathing meditation. Adopt a suitable sitting posture, making sure that you are comfortable, and that your body feels completely relaxed.

We must remember that calming the mind is the main cause of feeling truly at rest, mentally as well as physically. Mental restlessness is the result of not controlling the mind, and instead allowing it to ponder and fantasise about external objects.

We can see that no matter what we accomplish or possess, if the mind remains uncontrolled, it will never be satisfied. We can only experience satisfaction by controlling the mind, and keeping it contained within us. Even if we find the right external conditions for finding peace and satisfaction, if the mind is uncontrolled, we cannot feel at rest. However, if we are also able to calm the mind and create the cause of inner peace, then we will naturally find peace and happiness.

When we engage in meditation practice, our aim is to enhance inner peace and happiness. Our main focus should be on the mind and on understanding that all our problems result from the mind being uncontrolled, unguarded, and agitated. Through meditation practice, we try to gain control over the mind, instead of allowing it to be controlled by discursive thinking.

Right from the beginning in meditation practice, we should try direct our attention to the mind and see what's happening there. Then, we should try to bring the mind inward by getting rid of all wandering thoughts, which usually overpower it.

Having done this, we begin the meditation. The one that we do here is the breathing meditation, which involves focusing the mind on the in-breath and out-breath without falling under the influence of any external distractions. (*Pause for meditation.*)

We will quote verse 99 from the text, *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*, and then discuss it. It says:

Till the time when all motherly beings and I
Gain the perfect conditions for us to be Buddhas,
Though the force of our actions may cause us to wander
Through various realms in the six rebirth states,
May we always be able to help one another
To keep our aim fixed on enlightenment's shore.

In the preceding teachings, one engaged in the spiritual practice wherein one did the meditation of giving and

taking, in the sense of 'giving' one's body, all one's possessions, and all the virtuous merit that one has accumulated in the three times (past, present and future) to benefit all sentient beings. You were instructed to make a prayer to benefit all other sentient beings.

In this particular verse, one is further instructed to dedicate all the merit as a cause for oneself and all other motherly sentient beings to reach the unsurpassed state of enlightenment, abiding together in the pure land of Akanistha.

You also dedicate your virtuous merit to the thought that, until you and all other sentient beings reach the state of unsurpassed enlightenment, whatever actions that you and all beings do, may those actions reflect a sense of true love and care for others.

The lines in this verse show us that one of the key spiritual practices that we should do and that we should also encourage others to do is a practice that will benefit other beings until we achieve a state of complete enlightenment.

When the lines say:

Though the force of our actions may cause us to wander
Through various realms in the six rebirth states,

... they remind us that until we achieve complete enlightenment, the force of our karma (our actions) will control our destiny.

However, even though the force of our karmic actions may cause us and all other beings to wander through the six realms of cyclic existence, what is most important within this cycle of rebirth - for example as a human being - is to cultivate love and compassion and a feeling of closeness towards all other beings.

Through cultivating such love and compassion, we can overcome all hatred, jealousy, pride and harmful actions towards each other. The cause to find more peace in our own lives, and to bring peace to the world in which we live is love and compassion.

On the contrary, the cause of all the suffering and problems in our lives and in the world is showing hatred, jealousy and pride to each other. It is important to recognise the shortcomings of the ill-feeling we show to others, not only in terms of the harm it causes them, but also the harm it causes to our own life. When we generate love and compassion and try to diminish negative mental attitudes, this will naturally make

whatever actions we do to each other beneficial.

We must ask ourselves why, as human beings, we aren't able to enjoy the optimum goodness of this human life. If we examine so-called samsara or cyclic existence further, we see that there is a limit to the goodness that we can enjoy. Why aren't we able to achieve even that 'limited' goodness? The happiness we find in our relationships or whatever we achieve doesn't last long, but is quickly replaced by unhappiness and suffering – why?

If we examine the fundamental cause of all this unhappiness and suffering, it boils down to some unruly state of mind. Through our spiritual practice, we try to recognise this negative state of mind as our true enemy, in the same way that we label an outer object as an enemy because it prevents us from achieving happiness and instead brings us unhappiness. We need to recognise how this negative state of mind is a substantial cause of bringing obstacles that prevent us from achieving happiness or whatever we want to achieve in our lives.

In our spiritual practice, we must find out what matters most to us. We have to understand that the most precious thing for our inner happiness is maintaining a positive state of mind or a good heart – maintaining the correct way of thinking.

We then need to understand what causes can harm these good qualities within the mind, along with the causes of sustaining or safeguarding these qualities. So, making progress in spiritual practice simply means making progress in improving the quality of one's own mind, one's actions and one's own self.

That's all the teaching for tonight. As usual, we will chant the Buddha's mantra. Again, try to sit in the meditation posture, and remove all distracting thoughts before stabilising the mind within. Then, as we begin the chanting, we should try to focus the mind just on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYA SOHA

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