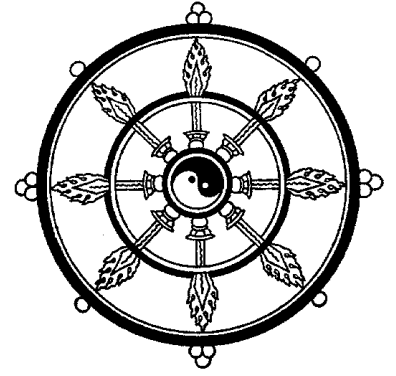


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# Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering



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Gaining the inner peace and happiness we seek, depends on the good health of our minds and bodies. To give rest and peace to our bodies, we need to detach ourselves from busy activity and relax in a peaceful environment. For mental rest, we must isolate ourselves from thoughts about the events which pre-occupy us. If we stop all this disturbing thought, we will find our minds at rest.

We shouldn't over-emphasise our need for physical rest at the expense of our practice of mental rest. In fact, if we investigate, we'll see that the main factor in our experience of relaxation is mental peace. Without it, while our minds are all over the place, busy with disturbing thought, even the best, most comfortable environments can offer us little in the way of relaxation. The state of our minds actually determines our physical experience so, to bring calm to our minds, we practice meditation.

We'll now do a short breathing meditation together. Choose a comfortable posture and feel the body at rest because right here, in this moment, we're free of the burden of any physical activity. Check that the mind is at rest. Let go of distraction to external objects and let the mind rest within. Direct this mind to the incoming and outgoing breath without drifting off after distractions.

Through this practice, our concentration can be increased. At first, when we try to keep our minds on the breath, our concentration is poor and we lose the object quickly. Counting the inhalation and exhalation as one round, if we begin with sessions of seven rounds, trying to keep focus on the breath for seven rounds, when this is achieved we can move to sessions of fourteen rounds, then twenty-one and, when this level is achieved, it is said that the mind has won some power of concentration and can be directed to focus on whatever topic you please. This is why we do the breathing meditation.

In doing this meditation, it is important not to force the mind, or to try too hard to concentrate. For beginners, the session should be short, to allow the meditation to progress as naturally as possible.

If, at the start, the session is limited to seven or even five rounds of breathing, then one can be sure the time is spent in quality meditation. Otherwise the mind can spend more time engaged in trying to prolong the meditation than in focussing on its object. Pushing the mind past its limit in meditation - instead of helping you focus - will cause strain and make you lose focus. And once the focus

is lost, if still you push on, then, when you next attempt the meditation, the mind will lose its focus at the same concentration limit. So forcing the meditation does not speed up progress, it creates a barrier to it.

If it becomes difficult to hold the object in one's mind, then, it is said, it is better to leave the object, to just let it go as your object of focus - and completely relax the mind. Feel, for a while, as if there is nothing at all in your mind. Then, once the mind is relaxed, you can resume your breathing meditation. In this way your meditation will be fruitful and you will make steady progress.

We'll now continue the discussion of "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons". We're up to verse 12 which reads:

Verse 12

When hunger or thirst overwhelms us,  
This is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full  
circle upon us from wrongs we have done.  
Till now we have kept what we have had without  
sharing;

We have plundered and stolen and lured people on.  
Hereafter let's take from them hunger and thirst.

If we go over the literal meaning of this verse, it states that our suffering of hunger or thirst is the result of wrongdoing in past lives such as stealing, taking what belonged to others by force and so forth. Then, by seeing this wrong as the cause for the suffering we now experience, we can use this suffering to develop love and compassion for all other beings and practice giving and taking. As we've discussed in previous teachings, we can think, "From this suffering of hunger and thirst that I now experience, may all other beings be free of such suffering." We can imagine taking upon ourselves all the suffering of hunger and thirst that exists throughout the world, throughout the entire universe. So, thinking that one's suffering represents the suffering of all beings, we take this suffering upon ourselves and wish all beings to have happiness.

We, in this country, need not endure the suffering of hunger or thirst, and for this we should think ourselves very fortunate, but this verse can still have meaning for us. The absence of this suffering indicates that we have not committed the wrong actions of stealing and so forth in the past, and we should feel pleased with this. We should also think of how to enjoy such good conditions in the future. The cause is to avoid actions like stealing and

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being miserly with our possessions. So we can read this verse as encouraging us to be more honest, more generous people. Taking what is not freely given and deceiving others in particular can cause not just long term but immediate suffering.

So, there are two things to consider;

1. How to utilise our wealth and
2. how to live a right livelihood.

We should think how to use our wealth wisely. If we ask why we amass our possessions, then the answer is to bring ourselves some satisfaction. So what is the point of being miserly or stingy if it means that we won't use our possessions to benefit even ourselves - let alone to share with our friends and family? And what is the point of holding on to possessions if we've no time for them to give us any satisfaction? Some people are afraid to touch their wealth for fear of exhausting it, even though they're very well off. They're stingy even when it comes to buying food and clothes for themselves.

The other aspect of this is to live a very right livelihood, not cheating others or stealing from them.

One consequence of such actions is that we lose trust, while, if we're honest, we win the trust of others. In the workplace, for instance, it's important above everything else that an employee be honest.

Dishonesty costs not only the employee his job, but the work goes badly as well. If six people, say, work together on a government project, and they all work diligently with a good motivation then, after ten years, even more people could be employed. But, if they've not performed properly, if their motives and actions have not been honest, then after some few years, some of the six have to leave the job. So it's especially important to think to be honest. If you're working for the government, you're working for the representatives of 17 or 18 million people. You don't want to deceive all these people. If everyone does his job honestly, the country progresses, there are fewer problems and therefore less crime, fewer robberies and so forth. But if people don't work properly, the country doesn't progress, people's livelihoods are affected, there's more crime, and so, more fear and insecurity. If we look at this verse from this perspective, of overcoming miserliness and avoiding these wrongdoings, then, if put it into practice, it has relevance not just for ourselves, but for the welfare of many other people.

Of course, as we said earlier, we don't face the problem of starvation in our daily lives, but for those of you who undertake the Nyung Na fasting practice, it is recommended that you apply the instructions for giving and taking as part of the practice. Think that the difficulties you experience are the result of your past miserliness and wrongdoing, so, feel positive and think that, through the kindness of my gurus, this past wrong is now ripening on me and I'll never have to experience the result of these actions again. As you bear the suffering think, "May all other beings be free of the same suffering."

So we'll finish tonight's teaching here. As you sit in the meditation posture, once again make sure your body is relaxed and as we chant the Buddha's mantra, focus the mind on the mantra.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

*Transcribed from the tapes by Jenny Brooks*

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