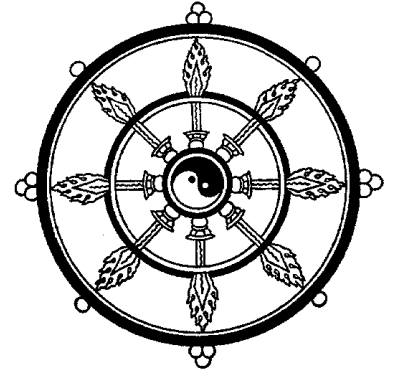

Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering



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We are going to do a breathing meditation first, so choose a suitably relaxed sitting posture. Think that during this time spent meditating, you won't let the mind overrule you, not for even a second. You don't want the uncontrolled and unruly mind to influence you, instead you want to subdue and fully calm it. So, through this meditation practice we aim to fully calm the mind and enhance your inner experience of peace and happiness.

Try to remove all distracting thoughts from your mind and rest the mind within. Now you can begin the breathing meditation. Make sure you have the strong intention to focus your mind only on the breath coming in and going out through the nostrils and not on any other object. Have single-pointed concentration on your breath, such that your mind is completely absorbed in the breathing, that the mind and the breath are inseparable. With this understanding of the meditation we can now begin.

It is important in meditating to achieve some level of single pointed concentration. It is said that through this state of concentration one is able to see the pure, clear nature of the mind. It is important to experience such a clear and pure state of mind. Like a reflection in an absolutely spotless mirror; the colour and other properties of whatever is placed before it are reflected very clearly. Or when glass is completely clean and free of stains, whatever is put in the glass is clearly visible. If, through concentration, our minds become clear and stable and free of distracting thoughts, it is possible to transform our minds into any state we wish.

We will continue the teaching on the 'Wheel of Sharp Weapons'. We are up to Verse 14:

Verse 14

When we hear only language that is foul and abusive,
This is the Wheel of Sharp Weapons returning full
circle upon us from wrongs we have done.

Till now we have said many things without thinking,
we have slandered and caused many friendships to
end.

Hereafter let's censor all thoughtless remarks.

This verse reminds us of situations where people receive verbal abuse or blame from others. People become annoyed and relationships can be damaged when they always hear bad things; for example in a work situation where a senior person has a bad habit of always bullying

others, of always telling them off and blaming them for mistakes they haven't made.

The author of this text, the Indian Master, Dharmarakshita, is saying that in these situations we really do need some inner strength and support, and we need to do some sort of spiritual practice which can help us achieve a positive way of thinking. It is said that without the help of some spiritual practice or some training of the mind then it is difficult to face these situations. The appropriate practice is to reflect on and contemplate the causes of facing these situations. Then, if we clearly understand the cause, we can resolve henceforth not to create it.

The cause is the 'Wheel of Sharp Weapons' returning. We always try to blame something else when we think of why we receive bad words from others, or why other people cause problems in our relationships. But the real blame lies with us; the real cause is our own action of negative speech towards others in the past. All the negative speech we hear from others, all the lies, slander and criticism, are nothing more than the ripening result of our own past actions of negative speech.

Now that we have recognised the true cause of our problems, we should stop using speech that may annoy or hurt others, that creates a rift between people in a close relationship or even destroys completely others' good relationships.

Basically, now that we can see the outcome of negative speech in our own life experience, we should try to feel strongly motivated to not repeat such use of language again, to refrain from lying and slandering, criticising and belittling others.

We need to incorporate this advice in our practice. The unfavourable and adverse conditions we face in life give us an opportunity to do some wholesome practice, to cultivate a virtuous state of mind and intensify our motivation to perform virtuous actions. If we follow the spiritual advice given here, then these situations won't be a source of misery and problems for us, but instead will provide us with positive opportunities.

So, there are a number of reasons why we shouldn't use bad or harsh language towards others. As we've seen, looking at ourselves, it causes us harm and we react with hatred and outrage when others speak badly to us. We

become upset because it disturbs our mind, our feelings. But, we should realise that other people get upset in the same way if we use negative language towards them. And, if we don't control our speech, we will never gain any trust from others.

Use of language says a lot about a person, people judge others on the basis of their speech. People who are polite and never lie, never abuse others and don't want to cause others harm through bad speech are thought of as honest and reliable. We admire these qualities.

In our daily lives our speech is mainly directed at the people we are close to, so if we don't control our speech then we are risking our friendships with the very people who are closest to us. We need to understand that bad speech is a major cause of our fights with others, and usually, as we emphasise often in these teachings, these others are none other than our partners, friends and workmates. We should think closely of the shortcomings of using bad and harmful speech.

Harsh speech can be a significant cause of being unable to resolve problems and differences with our friends. In any relationship there are differing needs and differing opinions and these cause some conflict of ideas. Resolving this conflict requires an important change-using speech that is gentle, soft and considerate. Gentle speech makes it possible for us to clearly see any differences and so resolve or come to terms with these differences. But if both sides use bad and hurtful words, then this just causes more problems, bringing more suffering and pain; and it doesn't help to deal with the real issue which divides these people.

When a friend uses harsh speech, it is important to try to control your response. If you don't, then expect to hear more harmful speech from others in the future. Control your speech and relax. If you're feeling hurt by what your friend has said, and your state of mind is unstable and disturbed, it may be better to say nothing. It is difficult to communicate properly with an agitated state of mind and it's better to wait until you and your friend calm down.

The line: "Hereafter let's censor all thoughtless remarks" means to never speak badly of the faults of others. Instead, we should focus on our own faults and think of how to remove them.

So we will finish the teaching here. As usual we will now chant the Buddha's mantra. Please choose a sitting posture and relax your body, bringing the mind fully inward. When we chant the mantra focus the mind on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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