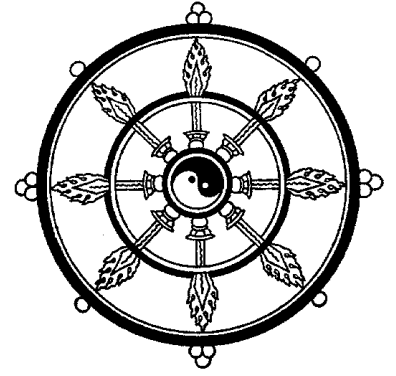

Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering



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We will begin with our usual breathing meditation together. Choose a comfortable posture and make sure that your body is fully relaxed.

As well as enjoying the benefits of physical relaxation, we can also enjoy mental relaxation and the peace it brings to the mind. We feel totally relaxed when both our minds and our bodies are at rest. The problem though is that our minds don't relax just because we want them to. The only way to relax the mind is to train it and tell it off when it is distracted. If the mind isn't subdued and controlled, it will generate undisciplined thoughts and focus on unnecessary objects. This, in turn, is the source of disturbing feelings and emotions like anger and attachment.

To increase our inner peace and happiness we have to remove these unnecessary thoughts. By distancing and separating us from the objects that cause the confusion and frustration, meditation brings control to the mind. In meditation, we focus on a specific, positive object rather than letting the mind wander after whatever is happening outside. In this way we can experience inner peace and happiness.

Try to bring the mind to rest by removing all outgoing thoughts. Begin the meditation by focussing the mind on the breath and be aware of the breath coming in and going out. Meditation is like giving our mind an opportunity to experience peace and tranquillity. A peaceful mind allows us to accomplish many things and achieve success in life.

We are up to Verse 15 in "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons":

Verse 15

When we are born in oppressive and wretched conditions,

This is the Wheel of Sharp Weapons turning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done.

Till now we have always had a negative outlook, we have criticised others seeing only their flaws,

Hereafter let's cultivate positive feelings and view our surroundings as stainless and pure.

This verse says that the cause of our suffering in life is because we have not held a positive state of mind towards other beings in the past. Our conditions of life are impure - impure in the sense that they are all in the nature of suffering. Even a minor incident can harm our body and

our mind, and we have to face receiving harm even from those who are close to us.

From the tantric point of view, one of the main causes of the suffering in our lives is our impure and negative perceptions of the world and of others. We view others as being ordinary, as secondary to ourselves, and we're not prepared to make any concessions for them. For this reason, we easily lose our tempers when we receive even minor harm from others. Because of these thoughts and the negative states of mind, we find much suffering in our own lives.

When we speak of our 'impure' circumstances, we're not speaking objectively, comparing our conditions with those in a pure land. We should understand this from the point of view of subjective mind, of our individual actions. We can see that not everyone is happy even though we live in a rich and very peaceful country. Many find a great deal of suffering in this relatively happy environment. So why is it that some people find that they experience suffering and lead a miserable life while others find that they live happily?

Considering immediate causes, we can understand that how a person lives his or her life has a lot to do with what they experience and find in life. The daily actions of people are an important factor in determining their life experiences as either happiness or suffering. If we perform more positive actions in our daily life then we will find more happiness and experience less suffering.

So, obviously, a safe and peaceful environment depends a lot upon the actions of those who live there. If their actions are negative, violent and aggressive, then their environment becomes a rough, unsafe place. Even if we can't practise the high view of seeing all things as the play of deep wisdom, the union of bliss and emptiness, we can still create a peaceful and safe living environment by creating the causes within ourselves. We can stream our attitude and our actions into a more positive path, and cause an immediate change in our living conditions.

Everyone can apply this practice into their lives. First we have to gain some knowledge of how peace arises, and where the violence and suffering come from. They actually come from the actions of people. An unhappy, unliveable place comes from violence and other negative actions. How can people find happiness if they are physically and mentally hurt? But a happy place comes

from people being kind, helpful and respectful of life. Even though you are just one individual, your positive actions will not only make your own life safer and more meaningful, but you are also making a great contribution to peace in the place where you live. Your friends and family benefit, and others will like you and feel good about you because they know that you don't hold any harmful thoughts towards them. However, this also applies to the impact of the negative actions of one person. These negative actions can bring a great deal of harm to many people and even whole countries.

The next verse reads, (though there's no time to begin the commentary tonight):

Verse 16

When we are parted from friends and from those who can help us,
This is the Wheel of Sharp Weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done,
Till now we having the taken the friends and good servants of others away wanting them for ourselves.
Hereafter lets never cause close friends to part.

This is the kind of practice we all need to do.

QUESTIONS

Question: Talking about seeing our environment as impure: if the focus is to see the environment as pure, then is the main practice to see the good qualities and kindness of others?

Answer: The answer is yes. Because, even from the point of view of the law of Karma, if people have committed many harmful actions towards others in past lives, then they are likely to find themselves reborn in a place where they find many enemies, and they will always find it difficult to gain friendship and trust from others and so forth.

As a result of the practice of love and compassion towards other beings, you will be reborn in a place conducive to peace, surrounded by kind people and friends, and no one will cause you any trouble.

Even within this lifetime we can see that there are connections between our actions and what we face in life. You can see that people who hold harmful thoughts towards others eventually have no friends. Any friends they do attract are similar to themselves, short-tempered and inconsiderate and the cause of more problems in their lives. Again, there is a causal link between our harmful actions to others and the harm we receive from them, even within our immediate experience.

We will now chant the Buddha's mantra. Sit in meditation posture with your body relaxed and remove all mental distractions. Chant the mantra and visualise the Lord Buddha and, while chanting the Buddha's mantra, imagine that you are receiving blessings and inspiring energy from the Buddha, filling your body. Feel all the causes of your problems go, even the uncontrolled mind is gone. Feel that you are completely filled with great happiness and peace inside. Or, if you prefer, you can just

focus the mind on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MUNAYE SOHA

Transcribed from the tapes by Jenny Brooks

Edited by Cynthia Kareena

Edit checked against the tapes by Richard Garward

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