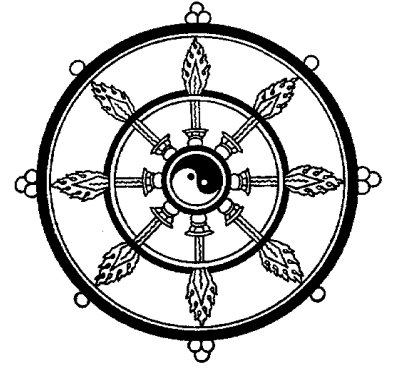

Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering



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As usual we will do some breathing meditation first. Just choose the most relaxing and comfortable sitting posture. Physical rest means that we are not busy doing an activity and that there is some physical stillness. Achieving stillness in the mind is just as essential. In order to find mental rest we have to stop all the busy activity going on in the mind. We lack this stillness in our mind due to an inability to focus or concentrate. Whenever we try to focus the mind on a certain object, it doesn't stay there. It gets distracted. The mind always fluctuates due to the busy thoughts that occupy it.

It is important to realise that, in order to find this mental inner peace, we need to get rid of all the wandering thoughts and the patterns that ensure our mind, rather than resting, is always on the run. Considering these things, try to now get rid of all your outgoing thoughts and rest the mind inward. Once we have stabilised our mind, begin the meditation by focusing on breathing in and out, making every effort to stop any distractions while we are meditating.

It is important to realise that happiness does not exist merely in terms of the physical or material, but also in terms of spiritual and mental happiness and well being. Without finding this inner mental happiness, then even if we do find material happiness we still won't have found happiness in our experience of life. When we can't find happiness in life, then we feel that there is no meaning to life and that there is no point to anything that we do.

For instance, in our daily life we generally go to work and come home. At work most people are busy and this is usually more physically demanding than at home. It can be very exhausting. At home there is not the same demand on our bodies, so we should find more rest and relaxation. Whatever we want is available.

But, from our own experience, we can see that suitable physical and material conditions don't necessarily make us happy, satisfied or rested. We can see the necessity of inner rest and inner happiness. Even if we are physically at home and at rest, we will have no mental rest if our mind is wandering outside and not at home with the body. With no mental rest we feel restless, even sad and empty.

If we could, however, find this inner peace and happiness, then we would find contentment in our good living conditions. At the end of the day we can, with mental rest, enjoy all the good things of life and all the comforts that we have at home. We can then find some

enjoyment and some satisfaction in the material conditions created from going to work and earning money. From our own experiences we can see that both physical and mental happiness are essential to our lives. And, of these two, it is the mental happiness that is the most important.

We will continue the teaching on the 'Wheel of Sharp Weapons'.

Verse 20

When our minds are unclear and our hearts are unhappy,

We are bored doing virtue but excited by vice,
This is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done,
Till now we have lead others to acts of non virtue hereafter let's never provide the conditions that rouse them to follow their negative traits.

This verse gives us advice for when we are undergoing problems and difficulties-particularly, when our minds become clouded and we cannot think clearly or concentrate. Sometimes this happens when we try to meditate and the mind is distracted and simply cannot focus on the given object. We may blame other people for this, or even blame some spirit influencing us. However, according to what is said here, the real cause of the problems in our minds is the wheel of sharp weapons returning. It is like our negative actions from the past, due to our self-centred and selfish mind, are returning full circle to us. Any problems that we face are the outcome of negative actions or the negative karma that we have accumulated in the past.

Our actions and karma are the fundamental cause of any type of problem. We can see our problems as a symptom of the stock of negative actions and negative karma that we have accumulated in our minds. Of course there can be many immediate causes and conditions. The main reason we accumulate negative actions is the self-cherishing mind. It influences and motivates us to do only negative actions, and suffering for both ourselves and others is the end result. We should relate all our problems and the accumulation of negative actions to our own self-cherishing minds.

These negative actions ensure the inevitability of problems in our lives, and we cannot even be sure ourselves of when we'll be calm and happy. For example, in the middle of an enjoyable cup of tea we can

find ourselves uneasy and uncomfortable, experiencing some problem in the mind. This is the outcome of our own negative actions and our own selfish mind. As it says here, we should therefore resolve to immediately minimise our negative actions, and minimise our contribution in causing others to perform negative actions.

Shantideva said that just as a person with a serious disease has little ability to do things which produce a great result, likewise, when our minds are clouded with ignorance and dullness, there's little opportunity for success. We need to focus on just what this self centred attitude is doing to us. It has always deluded our minds and influenced us to perform negative actions. When we create negative actions, like stealing, then this action not only serves as a future source of suffering for us, but can also be a cause for others to commit negative actions. Violent behaviour by police to catch criminals is an example of creating negative actions because of someone else's negative actions. We have to understand the shortcomings of negative actions as much as possible. This will then inspire us to create positive actions of body, speech and mind.

For all of us, inner happiness is the most essential thing to have. Without it there is no meaning and no hope. There are many types of problems we have to deal with - as parents, for example, who must deal with children's perceptions of the meaning of life. Parents are always concerned about their children's education and their futures. However, the children have their own problems, to such an extent that they can even lose interest in studying and looking for a job. This can become a cause of big conflict between parents and children.

The important thing here is to resolve the issue. First, both the children and the parents have to find some rest and peace in their minds. Parents need to understand their children's problems so the children can feel confident and happy about being at home. Regardless of whether their children finish their studies or whether they find a job or not, parents need to make sure that the children are enjoying themselves and enjoying life. If they are not enjoying life, parents need to think about what they can do so their children can be happier and calmer.

If parents are constantly telling their children to study and find a job, and the children are completely uninterested in this, then those children can become completely fed up with their parents, their only support in life. This can lead to children moving out of home, even if they don't really want to, and facing problems like having no money, staying in homeless refuges and being exposed to all sorts of trouble. The situation of these homeless children is pitiful because they don't have anyone to turn to for help.

In the end, as a parent, think about whether or not an education and a job is more important for children than having them living at home without much education and a job, but happy and out of trouble. It is more than likely

that if children are taken care of with great understanding and great compassion, and are made to feel welcome, then eventually they can look at their own futures and see the value of education and the importance of finding a job.

We are not just focusing on the children's problems here. After a while it becomes the parent's problem too. We are talking about the importance of mental calmness and mental happiness and, as a parent or a partner, we try to help. And the best thing that we can do for our families or for our partners is to try and understand their problems and try to help in whatever way possible. Try to create the best conditions for their mental rest.

It is not necessary for us to know the whole problem, but by giving our time, going out for walks or meals or a cup of tea together, we can help give time and space for peace and relaxation. Once people are mentally relaxed and calm, then they can see through their problems themselves. This is the best help that we can provide to our friends and family when they are undergoing conflict and problems.

We'll finish the teaching here and we can now recite the Buddha's mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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