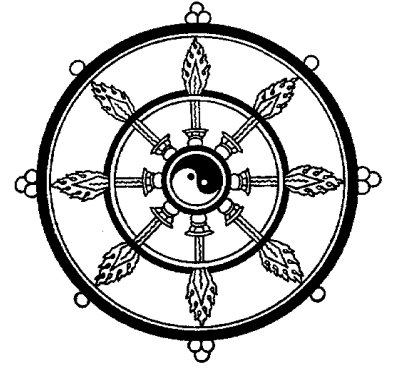

Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering



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Let's first do some breathing meditation. Sit in a comfortable sitting posture and just relax your body. Lama Tsong Khapa says to: "always apply mental stabilisation to destroy the enemy of disturbing conceptions." Even though we rest ourselves physically, we cannot rest if our minds have any disturbing thoughts. To find true rest and true peace it is important that we first confront and challenge the disturbing thoughts that distract our minds and not let it rest. The next step is to remove these thoughts.

It is natural for our minds to experience some peace when we leave behind all our disturbing thoughts, worries and external objects. We can see that the mind just stays within us. But because the mind is unused to staying within for a long time, we need to do something about it, otherwise it will just wander off outside again. So we need to discipline the mind by engaging in breathing meditation, where we use the incoming and outgoing breath as the object of focus. Let us do this meditation for just a few minutes. It is important to experience, to see the benefits of a mind calm and free from all disturbing thoughts.

We will now continue the commentary on the text *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*.

Verse 21

When our minds are disturbed and we feel great frustration that things never happen the way that we wish,

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

Till now we have caused interfering disturbance when others were focused on virtuous action, Hereafter let's stop causing such interruptions.

This verse is concerned with one of the major sources of problems for people in the world - not finding satisfaction in life. We don't find satisfaction, either because we can't get what we want, or we are not content with what we do have. This lack of satisfaction is what mainly bothers our minds.

If we look into the life of any person, whether highly respected, or considered to be of low social status, whether educated or uneducated, chasing worldly goals or even if they are pursuing a spiritual goal, they all share one common problem. They're unable to reach fulfillment in their lives, they're unable to achieve what they want to achieve. For example, in Tibetan society,

some parents send their children to a monastery at a young age in the hope that they can be good spiritual practitioners. The parents give all the support that they can, but sometimes the children just can't keep the monastic or the celibacy vows or they can't complete their studies. In the end there are problems in both the child's and the parent's lives. Likewise, people with a worldly or business mind always have business problems. They may not get everything done that needs to be done and many businesses even go bankrupt. Think of the student's life again - they have the problem of not being able to succeed in their studies as much as they would like.

This verse indicates that there is some cause for our failure, for not always being able to fulfil our wishes in life, a cause beyond what we can do in this life, even with the correct knowledge and correct method. This cause is karma. The karma of each individual is a factor in his or her success or failure in life. For example, out of two restaurants, both with the same plans that open in the same area, people tend to favor one restaurant and it will always be full. This shows that, apart from any immediate effort that is made, there is a karmic factor involved as well.

However, we should not feel too discouraged or frustrated when we cannot achieve our goals. In times of difficulty we should think, as the famous Indian master Ashvagosa, that we should raise our spirits and be aware that feeling discouraged is not going to solve the problem. We should bear in mind that there are always positive and negative factors involved in achieving our goals - favorable conditions and obstacles. We need to strongly feel that we have to take full responsibility for creating the favorable conditions and for showing patience toward any obstacles that come in our way.

When we have a strong sense of responsibility, high spirits and good motivation, then we are more likely to make a concerted effort and always be ready to face and confront situations without letting them discourage us and cause problems in our minds. Alternatively, if we are not strong enough, then it is easy for even a minor problem to disturb our minds, make us angry, and cause us to lose heart. Whenever we face a problem or some difficulty in our lives, then we need to think that this is the time to find a higher perspective and lift our spirits higher as well. We have to be positive. Then it is possible to get rid of the obstacles and reach our goals.

The obstacles we face in life are the result of the non-virtuous actions of our past, in particular disturbing others in their virtuous spiritual practice. This is what causes us great hardship in achieving our goals. Our practice should be to encourage others to practise virtue and to lead them to commit positive actions.

The last two lines of the verse again:

Till now we have caused interfering disturbance
when others were focused on virtuous acts
Hereafter lets stop causing such interruptions.

One of the main causes of not achieving our goals in life is the actions in past lives that disturbed others' virtuous practice. If we see others practising virtue, we should rejoice.. We should admire them in their practice. This will bring some joy and peace to our minds. If you see someone meditating and you feel good about their actions, if you genuinely rejoice, you'll feel peace and joy in your mind.

However, we are not used to rejoicing in other people's good deeds. If we don't rejoice in their actions and instead we feel jealousy, then we feel mentally disturbed. Jealousy is a common negative attitude. But if we examine its cause we can see that this jealousy is totally unnecessary. We can overcome jealousy in our minds by learning how to rejoice and admire the success and good actions of other beings. Rather than cause unease in our minds, we will enhance the joy and peace within us.

Speaking more generally, by following a regular meditation practice, we'll find - within ourselves - an effective way of solving the problems that we face in life.

We'll finish the teaching here and as usual we will chant the Buddha's mantra. Again, just try to sit in the meditative posture and feel the relaxation of your body. Remove all mental distractions, bring the mind inward and focus on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

*Transcribed from the tapes by Jenny Brooks
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