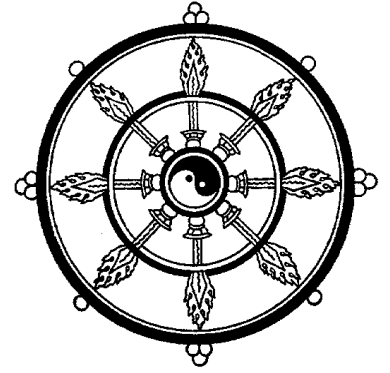

Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering



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As usual, we will do some breathing meditation first. Choose a sitting posture that is the most relaxing and convenient for you. Think about the fact that the mind is always with us, whether we experience pain or pleasure, whether we are sitting or on the move. The mind is always with us, wherever we go, whatever we do, whatever we experience.

There is great benefit to be found in the fact that our minds have an unbreakable link with us. If the mind is calm, relaxed and positive, then this is a great advantage for us. Having a calm and peaceful mind is the root cause of experiencing happiness and satisfaction. It is also a cause to sustain inner peace and happiness. So what prevents us from having a clear and calm state of mind? The main cause is our uncontrolled thought processes. Due to the influence of mental distractions, our minds are always wandering outside, dwelling on external objects. If we observe what happens when we don't control our mind, we find that it just wanders around outside thinking of different objects and events. But most of the time the mind does not return to us with a good result. Mostly it comes back after a long wander just to make us uneasy and restless. Due to this inner disturbance our minds can't stay still and quickly lose clarity and concentration.

The meditation practice we do overcomes such a wandering and uncontrolled mind. Initially in the meditation try to remove all outgoing thoughts and stop the mind from wandering outside. Once all the distracting thoughts are settled and the mind stays within, then we should start the meditation. Instead of allowing the mind to wander outside, in the breathing meditation we focus it on the outgoing and incoming breath, without being distracted by any other object. We can do this for a few minutes.

It is good to practise meditation whenever we can find the time, because it can help us find more peace and more happiness in our minds. And when we find peace and happiness, then naturally our friends will experience benefits. It is important to always remember to show caring thoughts, love and kindness to others, especially our friends. For example, if our friends are going through difficult times or if they're not happy, then we should try to be sympathetic and think about how we can help them.

To continue the commentary on 'The Wheel of Sharp Weapons':

Verse 22:

When nothing we do ever pleases our Gurus this is the Wheel of Sharp Weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done,

Till now with our Gurus we have feigned pious manners but out of their presence have reverted to sin,

Hereafter let's try to be less hypocritical and take all the teachings sincerely to heart.

The meaning of the verse is clear. There are many that have problems pleasing their spiritual teachers - or even their friends. No matter how they try to please others, they actually lack the conditions or the skills to please their teachers or friends. As the text says, 'This is the Wheel of Sharp Weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done.'

The cause of not being able to please one's Guru is that in the past we have been dishonest and have acted in opposition to the teachings of the Dharma. Even though we have received teachings from our spiritual teachers and have even made a commitment to them, our actions completely oppose the teachings and the commitments we have made. Our actions have been dishonest in the sense that we appear to be sincere and good practitioners in front of the teacher and our faith seems to be genuine, but behind our teacher's back we live and act in complete opposition to the Dharma. This has been likened to a cunning cat that seems gentle and calm, but behind the gentle actions the mind of the cat is trying to catch a mouse. Likewise the external behavior of a bird that catches a fish is also calm and skilful.

We don't do the actions that have been taught and encouraged in the teachings. We are doing the complete opposite of the spiritual advice given to us by our Gurus. As a result of such dishonesty towards one's teacher, problems then confront us in our spiritual life and practice.

We can see similar problems arise for children who deceive their kind parents. Where parents have a sense of care and real love for their children, the advice they give is from the heart, is worth heeding and pleasant. When children ignore such advice, in the end they can regret it and suffer.

This verse is saying that external and internal actions must be consistent with each other. We should not externally appear to be doing the right thing while

internally being the opposite.

This has a connection with the teachings of Nargajuna in his 'Letter to a Friend', in which he groups people's personalities into four categories by using the analogy of a fruit. You can have fruit which is ripe both externally and internally, or fruit which is not ripe both externally and internally, or ripe externally and not internally and the fourth category, ripe internally but not externally. People also fit into these categories, and the best category is to be ripe both externally and internally. The next best is to be ripe internally but not externally, and the worst is to be unripe both externally and internally.

This gives us an idea of what manner we should choose for ourselves, and also, what qualities we should look for when making friends. And our actions are important in the public eye, especially if you consider yourself to be a devout Buddhist or a devout Christian. If you don't behave properly, then people will blame your behavior and your faults on the religion you follow.

This verse also offers some advice on how to appraise others. You can't just base your judgement on their outer actions. These, as we said before, may be those of the cat that holds harmful thoughts within. It is important not to rush our judgement of others. Take a long time in observing a person that you like, and consider both their outer and inner qualities. It is possible to get some idea of what a person is like over a longer period of time. If people want to be close to you or want something from you, they will be on their best behavior - especially in the beginning. If we place trust in others too soon they can easily use us.

But, of course we are not just talking about knowing others, we're studying and learning what we, as a person, should be. We should think to improve ourselves both internally and externally.

We will now chant the Buddha's mantra. Once again, try to sit in the meditation posture, making sure that your body is relaxed and comfortable. Also make sure that your mind is resting within yourself instead of wandering outside. Then we focus the mind on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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