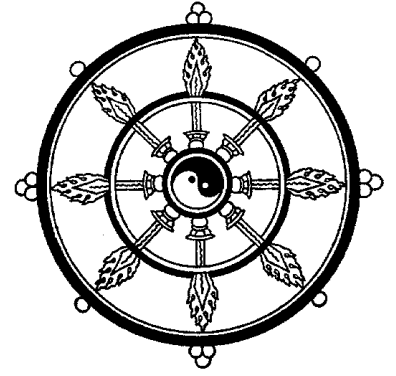

Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering



8 October 1997

First let's do a breathing meditation for a few minutes. Choose a sitting posture that most relaxes your body, and make sure that your mind is also resting within. We do the meditation practice so that we can train the mind well and develop habitual patterns of positive thinking.

During meditation we not only need to bring the mind inward, but also to observe which objects and which thoughts bring us mental distractions and agitation. In observing our mental continuum, we can notice certain thoughts or states of mind that have been a constant source of disturbance in our minds, an internal disturbance. We have inner unease when we have a state of mind that can't forget certain thoughts or objects. This inner unease continues if we keep holding on to that state of mind and we can't get rid of it. Whatever that thought or object possesses, even if it is something beautiful or pleasant, the fact remains that it is not doing us any good. It is the cause of our unease and our lack of inner stability. So we need to remove such states of mind and mental distractions.

When beginning the meditation, make sure that the mind is resting and has the ability to focus on the meditation object so that we can remove all the negative and distracted states of mind. The object that we focus all our mental attention on is our own inhaling and exhaling. We don't let the mind drift away from this object and we don't allow other objects and thoughts to interfere.

We need to remember that in meditation the focus is on creating the causes for happiness from within. The other way of finding happiness is in a material way, where our focus is always on the outside world. We try to meet our material interests by collecting or owning certain objects and by throwing others away. We seem to have some faith that finding satisfaction from external objects will bring us more happiness. But we can see that this is not always the case. If we focus inwardly we can bring ourselves happiness by transforming or changing our mental attitude. Changing our perspective or viewpoint makes a difference by bringing us happiness. Looking at our personal experiences, finding happiness from within, rather than from the external world, seems to ring more true for us. Think more about this issue for yourselves.

The Wheel of Sharp Weapons

Verse 23

When others find fault with whatever we are doing

And people seem eager to blame only us,
This is the Wheel of Sharp Weapons returning
Full circle upon us from wrongs we have done.
Till now we have been shameless not caring about
others,
We have thought that our deeds did not matter at all,
Hereafter let's stop all our offensive behavior.

This is spiritual advice that can help us to transform adversarial situations into an inspiration to practise. We often face the problem of receiving blame, accusations or criticism from others, even though we've done nothing wrong. We feel hurt when this happens and our immediate response is hatred and anger because we always have the view that we are perfect, that we haven't done anything wrong.

But everything that happens in our life is connected to our own actions, either past or present. Understand that this whole situation exists as a result of our own karmic actions. Even if we haven't directly caused harm to others, yet still they turn against us and accuse and belittle us, then we have an indication that the negative action of harming others has been committed in the past. We didn't show any restraint and had no sense of shame. We may have even caused harm to our spiritual teachers, parents or close friends.

We have to use these situations to remind us of our spiritual practice, and to show more understanding towards people, rather than having a selfish attitude. If we only act when we ourselves benefit, then we won't be considering the effects of our actions, even if they harm others. Such situations can teach us to develop more understanding and more faith in the law of karmic cause and result. We will then find some space within ourselves to show tolerance towards others and be inspired to be responsible for our own actions by adopting more skillful, positive actions and rejecting the negative, unskillful ones.

The line "Till now we have been shameless not caring about others" is teaching us to have a sense of shame and embarrassment because these give us the impetus to be more disciplined and restrained in our actions. If you have no shame or embarrassment at all, then you become careless and reckless and commit many negative or unwholesome actions. When we talk about shame, or moral shame, we are talking about the thoughts we have just before doing a negative action- for example, that this is not correct or skillful and I should refrain from doing it.

Here shame is the main reason we stop doing a negative action. We realise that it isn't good for us and there's an awareness of its bad consequences. Shame gives us an incentive to avoid committing negative actions.

Embarrassment is about refraining from actions by thinking about the views of others like our spiritual teachers or parents. We think that this action would be against their wishes, or even break a promise that we had made to them. On the basis of this consideration for the thoughts of others, we are motivated to avoid negative actions. So shame and embarrassment are positive things. They encourage us to adopt right actions and avoid wrong ones.

In most religious traditions vows are taken before a priest or a holy person in a holy place like a church or a Buddhist temple. The whole point of this is to feel obliged to do your practice and to make it easier to remember your vows. It also makes it easier to feel shame because, if you break a vow or commit a negative action, then it is like acting against the god or whomever you took your vows before. And it is easier if you think that the god is all knowing, because then there is no point of thinking to do anything in secret. So a sense of moral shame and embarrassment are both important factors in performing more positive actions and diminishing negative ones.

For example, some people hold their wedding ceremony in a holy place. A priest, or someone held in high regard, marries them and witnesses their promise. The holy place and the holy person help give people the courage and inspiration to have a long lasting and stable relationship. If this didn't help, then why bother being married by a highly regarded person and in a special place? This is Geshe Doga's own personal view, and the purpose he sees for having a wedding in a holy place.

So we finish the teaching here and as usual we will chant the Buddha's mantra. While chanting the mantra try to make sure that your body is relaxed and that the mind is also resting inward rather than being distracted. Then just focus the mind on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edit checked against the tapes by Richard Garward

Edited Version

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