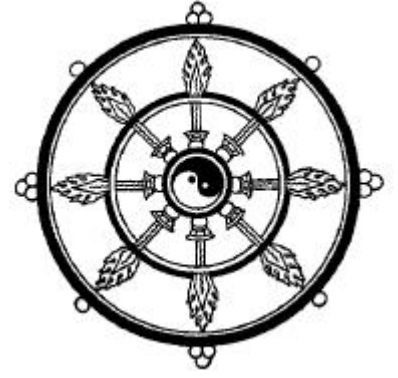

Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering



13 August 1998

As usual, we will do some breathing meditation first. Please choose a convenient sitting posture, making sure that your body is fully relaxed and your back is straight. We meditate to increase stability in the mind and to improve its functioning, so it is important to focus on your own mind in the practice.

Our mind lacks concentration and stability because of undisciplined thoughts, which tend to wander off after external objects. We have to realise that our mind needs to be cut off from any external objects that could distract it. The mind can then be stabilised and brought inward, bringing us inner peace and inner stability. However, the mind could go outside again if it is still under the influence of external objects. So before it heads off towards the external object of attraction we need to place the mind on our breathing. Single pointedly focussing the mind on the breathing prevents any distracting thoughts from arising.

We have to realise how important good health is to our mind and our body, because our enjoyment of life depends on it. We know a lot about maintaining the health of our body in terms of a healthy diet and so on, but we also need to know about keeping a sound and healthy mind. The mind is also a part of our existence, our being, it is something that we cannot live or exist without, we are inseparable from it. While we need to put in our best efforts to ensure the good health of our mind and body, we also need to realise that we can't always be physically and mentally happy and well. Whether or not you are a religious believer, or rich or poor, you have to bear some amount of physical or mental unhappiness in this life.

We all have some goal in life and, whether it is spiritual or worldly, it is important for us to achieve our goal. We think we can place some hope in the outside world, but the most important condition that we need to realise our goal is to make use of our knowledge, our intellect and our powers of reason. Through our reasoning mind we can see how to achieve our goal and make the effort required. Once we have a clear idea of what to do we can't just lie back and do nothing, we need to actively make that effort. Making an effort is the most important factor in achieving our goal, and for this we need a great deal of courage and self-motivation. We also need to have a strong sense of self-responsibility, an awareness that no one but us can achieve our goals.

All these things, as well as the good health of mind and

body, are indispensable in achieving our goals and accomplishing things in life. That's why meditation is so beneficial. It directly helps us to keep our mind peaceful, clear and sound, bringing us inner peace and happiness. This soundness of mind also helps maintain a healthy body.

In order to deal with the cause of unending problems we have to deal with our own minds. The main cause has nothing to do with external objects in terms of how many friends we have or how many material possessions we own. It is clear and obvious through our experience that if the mind is not controlled and subdued, then there will be no end to our problems and our suffering. Some people who undergo suffering believe that its cause is having no friend. But then there are many others who suffer because of their friends.

The cause of our problems is actually related to our mental attitude and our way of thinking. If we can change our way of thinking, then it doesn't really matter whether or not we have any outer comforts or not. For example, rather than thinking about the disadvantages of not having a friend, people suffering from loneliness should think about the advantages of their independence, and their freedom from all the problems a relationship brings. Another example is that if you don't have a car then you don't have the problems of owning a car.

Our problems are mainly due to not being able to curb or check the desire in our minds. As the Indian master Ashvagosa said, with desire there is no contentment. Even if we have everything we need in life, somewhere in a corner of the mind we always feel that we need something more, that what we have already is not enough. Regardless of what we achieve in this life, we will continue to have this problem of discontent unless we subdue our minds and overcome desire. All the Kadampa Lamas say that whoever has no control of his or her own mind will never find peace and satisfaction.

The cause of all these desires in the mind is not controlling our minds- letting them always roam and wander. We give way to many conceptual thoughts in the mind and, because of these, desire arises.

We can control the mind and stop it from being influenced by wandering thoughts through meditation practice and this will increase the peace and happiness within our minds. It is said that if we enjoy good physical health as

well as this mental happiness, then we have good reason to be contented with our life. We don't know how long we will live, but in that time if we enjoy our good physical health and relatively good mental happiness and think that this is enough, then all the rest is not so important, in terms of outer objects like friends and material possessions. If we could reduce unnecessary thoughts and be content then that would bring us some peace and happiness.

We need to watch the mind constantly. If we recognise a thought we should analyse it and observe what it does to us. Certain thoughts are not beneficial, like delusions and fantasies, and they need to be overcome. Otherwise they can delude us and lead us away from our own reality. If you have a desire or a want that is impossible to achieve, then there is no use in even having that thought. In doing this practice of investigating your own mindstream or thought processes, you can talk to your mind and analyse whether what it wants to do is feasible or not, and whether this action will accomplish any good results or not. If the mind's thoughts can't be achieved and there is no result at the end, then say so to your mind. Being aware of your own mind overcomes useless patterns of thought and allows other, clearer states of mind which bring us a clearer knowledge of the truth of ourselves. Positive states of mind are the real treasure; they are like our inner jewel.

We'll finish the teaching for tonight and will now chant the Buddha's mantra. Sit in a comfortable posture and let go of all the wandering thoughts. As the mind stabilises inside begin to recite and focus on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA.

Transcribed from the tapes by Jenny Brooks

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Edited Version

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