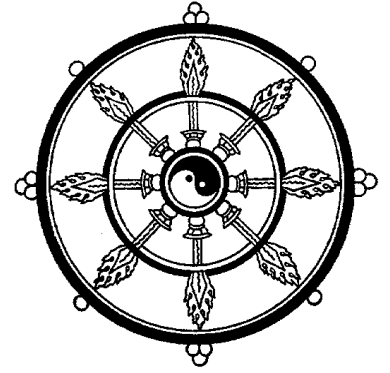

Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering



10 September 1997

First of all we will do a breathing meditation together. Adopt a suitable sitting posture, making sure that your body is fully relaxed and comfortable. The aim of this meditation is to subdue the unsubdued mind and to give it rest. Our main obstacle in meditation is the unruly, disturbing thought which can influence our minds to wander outside, making rest impossible.

At the start of the meditation it is important to try to remove all these wandering thoughts so that the mind can rest within and stabilise. Resolve to discipline your mind during the meditation and not let it wander off to any other object, other than the one you have chosen, in this case, the incoming and outgoing breath. Keep this strong resolve as you start the meditation by placing the mind on your breath as you inhale and exhale through the nostril.

With regard to the importance of controlling the mind, Shantideva has said, "What is the point of pursuing any ascetic or vigorous practice if it doesn't help one in controlling the mind?"

Likewise the famous Atisha said, "The supreme spiritual instruction is to watch one's own mind." And further, "When alone, watch the mind." Many famous and highly realised teachers emphasise that there is no more beneficial spiritual practice than that which helps us to control our minds.

The essence of meditation is to develop mental concentration which will free our minds from the dominant influence of negative states of mind. To fully appreciate the meditation practice we really need to understand the benefits of removing the three poisonous afflictive emotions. We need to see the benefits of having a more focussed, clear mind under our control.

To achieve this we should contemplate the main source of our daily problems, whether it be external or within ourselves. We always find frustration, misery and dissatisfaction in life. There is something not right within us; from our own side we feel that there is no stable peace and enjoyment in our lives. But it is not always the outer interference in life that stops us from feeling happy. If we examine the source of our daily problems carefully and thoroughly, we find that the real source is within ourselves.

We experience restlessness, anxiety, tension and frustration because our mind has been disturbed by the emotional afflictions – the three poisonous states of

mind. Whenever these negative states dominate our minds, we find ourselves unhappy, regardless of any outside factors. It is said that we need to see the meditation practice as the means to remove the influence of the negative states of mind. Meditation disciplines our minds to concentrate on the given object and it is the increasing familiarity with the meditation object which counters the delusions and afflicting emotions that disturb and distract us.

We need to understand that the practice which we ourselves do, to overcome deluded states of mind and develop inner qualities, is the refuge that we find in spiritual teachings. This is the inner wealth, or what is referred to as the *inner* jewel that brings us happiness and peace in life. This practice is the true practice of Dharma.

Within the meditation practice there are many methods and many objects we can employ to train our minds. One highly recommended and excellent object, especially if you have faith in the Buddhadharma or have taken refuge, is the image of Lord Buddha himself. Mentally focussing and resting your mind on Lord Buddha leads to inner peace and happiness. If, in life, we become used to focussing on the image of Buddha, then it will be easier to do this near the time of death. If you can do this, then the moment of death can be peaceful and without fear. It is also said that such meditations can ensure a better rebirth and more happiness in the future life.

We can identify some desires and hatreds as an immediate source of suffering and pain. While it takes a long time to permanently overcome desire or hatred, we can still find a way in meditation to prevent unfulfilled desires causing us a great deal of suffering. We need to know its cause. Once we can pin point the object of desire that brings the greatest amount of suffering to our minds we must think of how to rid our minds of the object.

Of course, we first need to clearly recognize the necessity of removing the object. We can do this by reflecting upon the suffering that we experience from this desire, which has completely taken away our happiness and the peace within our mind. Once we see how much this desire is destroying our lives and how much it is responsible for the immediate suffering in our mind, then it becomes quite natural to be alarmed and more conscious of protecting ourselves from desire for that

object.

In meditation, try to completely forget, or distance the mind from that object of desire and consciously make the effort to place the mind on the given meditation object. In the beginning it is not easy to forget about the desire objects, or indeed to have any influence over them. But if you exert effort then you can gradually begin to develop some concentration on the meditation object. Because the mind is focussing on the meditation object, you will not experience the suffering and pain caused by desire. You have not found the permanent solution, but you will gain some temporary relief from the desires by simply replacing that object of desire with a new object of attention. You will at least find some temporary peace and the mind will be more at ease.

You can use the same method of mind training to overcome any other type disturbance in your mind. By simply being aware of your mind and recognising the state of mind that causes unhappiness you are in a position to replace the negative state of mind with a positive one. When you gain some benefit from your practice, you will then feel more positive about it and you will have more faith in your meditation practices.

Sometimes it's effective to think about negative states of mind and negative actions. Imagine how bad your life could turn out if you keep hanging on to these negative states of mind. If we are more aware, and feel a sense of fear of the consequences of both our negative thoughts and negative actions, then this can help us to minimise them. Geshe Doga always advises young people not to get addicted to smoking by thinking of their current youthful and strong body, full of life, but instead to think how this will be lost, the body becoming weak, unhealthy and smelly and losing its fresh youthful look. By thinking of the consequences of smoking, they realise they shouldn't become addicted if they don't want those unpleasant consequences.

The two most important things in life are a healthy body and a healthy mind. If our body becomes weak and infected with some serious disease, then it is difficult to find happiness in life. Even if we have an interest in spiritual practice, having an unhealthy body doesn't make it easy. So, especially at a young age, we have to foresee the negative consequences of smoking on our health at a later age. But it is hard for young people to anticipate the negative effects of such an addiction on their later life.

We'll finish the teaching here and as usual we will chant the Buddha's mantra. Sit in a meditation posture, relaxing the body. As we chant the mantra, try to focus the mind on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

*Transcribed from the tapes by Jenny Brooks
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Edited Version*