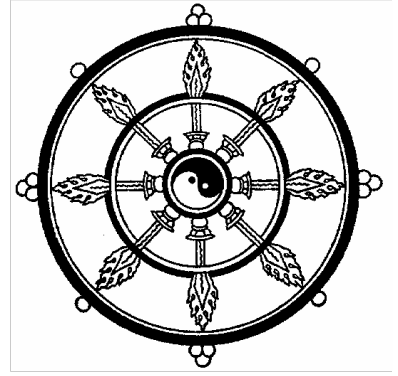

Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering



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First, to begin the breathing meditation, sit in a comfortable position and fully relax your body. If we could enjoy a fully relaxed mind as well, it would be a great thing!

We use the mind and body as the basis for creating the causes for inner peace, happiness and satisfaction. To create the causes of peace and satisfaction within ourselves, its very important that we learn how to discipline and control the mind, so we're not overpowered by harmful thoughts or afflictive emotions.

If we're overpowered by, say, passionate desire then we end up with frustration and depression. To free ourselves from this delusion we must train the mind so that it is no longer attracted to desire objects. With meditation - consistent mind training - we can completely free ourselves from the influence of desire and other delusions.

So, remembering that the purpose of meditation is to control or tame the mind, we'll begin by slowly ridding the mind of external sensual distractions. This will bring the mind inward and stabilise it there. Now we can begin the breathing meditation. Direct your whole focus to the breath as it comes in and goes out through the nostrils. Make every effort to keep an undistracted focus on the breath.

It is beneficial for us to have a pure mind and a pure body. Just as we benefit physically from learning the principles of good hygiene, in order to bring some mental benefit we need to have knowledge of what causes unhappiness or unrest in our minds. As we begin to focus on our mind we will find that the main cause of mental unrest are disturbing thoughts - especially those conceptualizations or ideas which serve no purpose other than to bring confusion and distraction to the mind. So, for good mental hygiene, we have to try and cleanse the mind of these unnecessary thoughts.

Because we have held on to and cherished these thoughts for so long they may seem very fixed and immovable. We need to believe that we can dislodge such disturbing thoughts, and then, with confident application of mind training, destroy them completely.

There is no benefit from our learning if we don't put it into practice. Certainly, we should acquire some knowledge of the mind, of what mental states benefit and what states bring harm. If, however, we make no effort to adopt and practise the mental states we've understood to be positive - tolerance, compassion or love - and operate in our usual neurotic way, being led by

delusions such as desire or anger, then there's no benefit to one's life, no matter how much theoretical knowledge we possess. We can think, for example, of a person with great knowledge and extensive qualifications, but who is obsessed by desire. If that desire became such that he or she loses all self-control, then, controlled by delusion, the person would be incapable of making much use of the great store of knowledge they possess. If we always try hard to integrate into our lives what we learn, then regardless of any difficulties we may have to face, over a period of time our practice will definitely yield great results.

When we follow this teaching on mind training, rather than viewing it as a process of theoretical learning, it's far more beneficial if we relate it to our lived experience, and take these teachings as practical advice. We all wish for a better frame of mind, for clarity of thought and mental stability. With the practice of mental discipline we can uproot the cause of that dissatisfaction, which brings so much misery and contaminates our enjoyment of even the best things in life. We can have the best homes, clothes, food, but with an untamed mind, we may not even be able to fall asleep at night!

If we look closely at the destructive potential of our minds, we can see that it possess the power to bring untold suffering and misery. So its important to observe the mindstream and, recognising the disturbing thoughts, make as much effort as it takes to control and get rid of them. Otherwise they can become habits, built into the fabric of our minds, and become much harder to remove. So, this advice on meditation is intended to bring about a change in our day-to-day life. We need to begin to diminish the negative mental habits in our mind and encourage positive ones.

To train the mind, we need to focus within the mind itself. We can't employ some external apparatus to fix the mind; we have to apply meditation and examine the way our mind functions. In this way, we can make progress.

Our own observation can provide us with the knowledge of what we need to do to gain the peace and happiness we seek in life. If we examine the true cause of happiness then we'll see that it does not arise in dependence on external phenomena or other people, but that the true cause is something created within, from one's own side. So, its much more effective to focus on our personal potential to create internally, the necessary conditions for happiness - a happiness independent of external conditions.

To achieve this independence, we need to be self-determining and self-motivated, we need to make an effort to develop a lived experience of the mind training, and we should exercise our own intelligence and discernment before we undertake any kind of action or make any decisions. Until we cultivate this independence, it is as if we can't enjoy any happiness unless it is provided from some external source. We should try to get rid of this attitude and, with courage and self-determination, strive to be independent of outer conditions. If we make no effort in this, then it's difficult to find any happiness even if it's offered to us. If we try to make our own lives happy, to create the internal conditions for happiness, we're then in a position to take enjoyment from the good things in our lives.

Geshe Doga relates that just the other day, a six year old joined him for lunch. Geshe-la asked the boy whether he'd need a car, or good clothes when he grew up. The boy replied, 'yes.' Geshe Doga then told him, if he was to have these things when he grew up, he'd need to be a good person now, to be a good boy for his parents and teachers, that this is the cause of being able to reach his goal. Because his English is not good Geshe-la wasn't sure that the boy had understood him, but the boy said, 'Thank-you very much. I will do as you've said.' The point here is that it's important to set a goal and make the effort now to reach that goal.

Geshe Doga says that he has asked the same question of other children, and that they've all been very clear about what they want. Each time, Geshe-la has advised them, as with the other boy, if you do this, then you get that. So, if their goals are clear and firmly set, then naturally they want to know the causes by which they can achieve those goals, and, automatically, they're inspired to create those causes. It is the same for us. It is important to have such a goal, to have a strong, courageous determination to achieve it, and once we're very committed to getting to that goal, we'll look for a method to achieve it. When we find one, we'll naturally apply it with enthusiasm.

We were supposed to be discussing *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons* but there's not much time left so one very important instruction is to always live your life in the present moment. This, of course, is the task in meditation, to focus completely on the meditation object, or the given subject matter, and this brings peace to the mind. At other times, be present, abide in the moment when enjoying tea, or engaging in your work - it is important to try to keep the mind focussed on the job at hand. Whatever your activity, if the mind is present in that activity then it becomes an effective means of calming the mind, and ensuring mental stability.

So we'll leave the teaching here. As usual we'll recite the Buddha's mantra seven times, so, seated in the meditation posture, focus the mind on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA