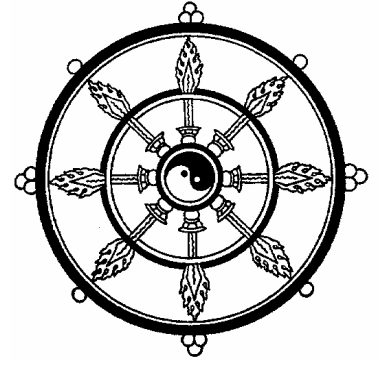

Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

ཨོ ལྷོ་ལྷོ་མཚོ་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



27 August 1997

As usual we will do some breathing meditation together. Choose a comfortable meditation position, making sure that all parts of your body are relaxed.

In any meditation that you do there is a given object which the mind is bound to. Our aim is to develop single pointed concentration on that object. Literally, in Tibetan, meditation means 'to familiarise our mind'. The implication then is to make every effort to familiarise our mind with the object of meditation. Usually this given object is chosen to enhance some inner peace and tranquility; it is not the kind of object that arouses disturbing emotions like desire, anger, jealousy and so forth. It is said that if you do the meditation properly then it naturally calms the mind and gives some experience of peace and tranquility.

However, if we don't bring the mind inward and stabilise it, then we can't meditate because our mind will be wandering outside, racing after external objects. It is impossible for us to meditate when the mind is distracted by such external influences. So the most important thing in meditation, after having chosen an appropriate sitting posture, is to try to fully stabilise the mind inward and make sure that it stays that way. This is achieved by removing all our outgoing thoughts until the mind just stays within.

After we have managed to rest the mind inward, then we try to calmly and gently, without forcing it, direct the mind towards the chosen object of meditation; which in this case is the outgoing and the incoming breath. So now focus all your mental attention onto the breath, not letting the mind be distracted by any other object.

This breathing meditation is a simple yet effective technique to immediately calm the mind, and its disturbing and negative states. Other meditation practices that require a lot of study and thought can sometimes be very confusing to the mind. But the breathing meditation, done on a regular basis - irrespective of the duration of the practice, whether a few minutes or an hour - is very relaxing for the mind. The breathing practice is simple and easy, and directly releases any mental disturbances, tensions and so forth.

We need to find the best method to help us overcome the problems that we face in our mind. In general we say that each mentally related problem such as anger or desire has its own specific remedy by which it can be overcome and removed. For instance, the remedy for anger or hatred is practising patience and tolerance. But

if the force of anger or hatred is intense, then we won't be able to practise patience, there will be no room in our minds for patience. Likewise, the remedy for desire or obsession is to contemplate the object and see its negative and ugly aspects. But, as with anger, when the desire is very strong we can't direct our minds to accept advice and see another aspect of the object. At these times, the best practice is the breathing practice. Don't worry about what caused the anger and whatever frustrated the mind. Just do the breathing meditation for a while to calm and relax the mind. Through this meditation we can make room for some sense, some discrimination and clearer thinking. We are then able to apply the appropriate remedy to overcome anger, desire, etc.

Another way to minimise a problem in the mind is to develop an understanding of the mind and to observe the various thoughts that it produces. One thing our thoughts occupy most of our time with is our own life, our future and our goals. It is important to take responsibility for ourselves and to consider the issues that concern our lives. But at the same time we need to check our mind and the thoughts that we generate. It is possible that many of these thoughts are totally useless in helping us to see a better future, to finding the right solution to solve a problem or to create the right causes for our future happiness.

If we do not check and discipline our minds then we can start off with one thought and build it up into an undisciplined train of thought which then leads to problems. Following these lines of thought, it is as if we are making up or creating a problem, especially when we start to see these wild thoughts as real and concrete. Even though it seems that we are experiencing a real problem, it is actually just made up by our uncontrolled minds, our own uncontrolled thought processes. That is why it is important to always try to investigate our thoughts as they are generated. Even if they are thoughts of our goals in life, we still need to make sure that we use our common sense to make these goals realistic and beneficial.

Whether your goal is spiritual or mundane, if you consider carefully how to achieve that goal, then that thought can guide you to actions which can achieve the desired result. But, as we said before, if we don't give due consideration, then all the energy we put into our thought processes becomes a source of unnecessary problems for us, rather than a cause of what we want.

Basically meditation is all about knowing yourself.

Knowing the best course of action is important, because to be successful and achieve what you want in life, you have to do something from your own side and create the causes yourself.

So, it is important to think about what you can do from your own side to improve the quality of your life and to improve your relationship with society. Developing method and wisdom from our own side, we can find the best course of action and find the knowledge to see things as they really are. Here the most important thing is to always have a stable mind; otherwise you can't even do the day-to-day things properly or respond to others in an appropriate way.

Learning to keep the mind in the present moment is an effective technique to achieve a positive result out of whatever action you do. Even for simple actions such as eating a meal it is important for our mind to be there in that present moment so that we can actually taste the food. Otherwise we mindlessly eat without tasting, and if somebody asked us what we ate, we would not remember. Also, if we don't keep our mind with us our efforts can become very weak. If we are not concentrating on the work that we do, we may not enjoy it as much as if we were concentrating, and we might even find that the work is not being done properly. If our mind lacks the focus, then our efforts become weak.

As many of you have already heard, when Geshe Doga was a young monk he missed his mother very much. People could say that this is natural, but Geshe Doga, who was undergoing the rigorous monastic curriculum, found himself unhappy and the memories of his mother were at one stage a great obstacle to his studies. He could not fulfill all the study requirements given by his teacher, like memorising texts, let alone enjoy his leisure time or the good meals he was given. It became obvious to Geshe Doga that what you are trying to achieve can be hindered by such a thought.

From our own side, we can achieve success in this life by removing disruptive thoughts from our minds. It is important, for our own benefit, to make the effort to cleanse our minds, to ensure the mind is honest, understanding and compassionate. We need to make sure that we have the right frame of mind with which to see things clearly and to know the right, most skillful means to use in our daily actions.

The teachings emphasise that we need to first do the right thing from our own side and show the right attitude towards others. If we don't do anything from our own side, then whenever we face a problem we tend to blame others as the cause of our problems and also expect that it is someone else's job to solve them. We have no chance to solve our problems when we view our happiness and the solution to our problems as someone else's responsibility. We can get some support from others, but not the full support needed to solve the problem or to give us happiness. This depends especially on the amount of support, love and understanding that we have shown to others in the past. If you utilise whatever knowledge you have and whatever your common sense tells you, as well

as not relying much on others, then you will be able to see things clearly and realise what the best course of action is at that time in that particular circumstance.

Geshe Doga says he tells people that when their partner comes home from work abnormally stressed or angry, trying to find out what is wrong may cause them to be even more upset. In the first place you are not even sure of the cause, and secondly there is no need to feel any guilt that you have maybe done something wrong. It is perhaps better just to tell your partner to rest and offer to organise dinner, or do some other action to help relax them and to show your support.

In true spiritual practice when we do something for others we should not be expecting any reward for our actions. It has to be completely unselfish and completely giving. And even if we hope for some reward, support or love from others, we first have to do the same. We have to show love and support for others first.

We will finish the teaching here. As usual we will chant the Buddha's mantra and, as before, try to relax your body and sit in meditation posture. Calm the mind by removing all thoughts. As we begin the chanting focus the mind on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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