Dharmarakshita's "*The* Wheel *of* Sharp Weapons" A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga Translated by Samdup Tsering

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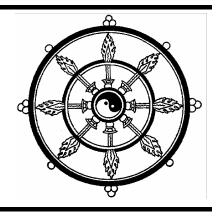
Let us first do some breathing meditation. Relax your body and choose a comfortable position. Our first concern in meditation is ensuring that we have the best and most beneficial motivation for doing the meditation. We are practising meditation in order to be able to benefit others by calming and controlling our mind. It is important that we don't meditate for any selfish reasons. It is also important that we have a set aim. This is why we establish a proper motivation at the start of our meditations. When we set up a proper motivation we are then clear about what we are trying to achieve in our meditation practice – calming and transforming our mind so we are able to benefit others, rather than for any selfish reasons.

Now establish the right motivation for this meditation. After having established a suitable motivation, the next thing in a meditation practice is to withdraw our mind from any external objects of attraction. We have to make sure that we stop our mind from wandering outside by bringing it fully inward and letting it rest there awhile. Now we can start the breathing meditation where we concentrate on being aware of our breath coming in and going out. Nothing else should be in our mind. We need to make sure that we have single pointed concentration on the incoming and outgoing breath.

It is our responsibility to take care of our mind and body. We look after our mind by having a meditation practice where we are always observing our mind and watching our thoughts in the continuum of our mind. Whenever we recognise a bad thought or any negative states of mind, we try to subdue and correct them. We will then find that our mind will become calmer and we can enjoy both a healthy body and healthy mind with lasting peace and happiness.

There are some ways of thinking and states of mind that we must change. So we shouldn't, as some people do, acknowledge their negative and destructive states of mind and say that they can't change and that it's almost impossible to change. They don't even make any initial attempt to change or to challenge these negativities in the mind. Rather, we need to remember that we do have the ability to change and to shape our mind.

Practising involves keeping what we recognise to be positive and beneficial states of mind, and overcoming the recognisable negative and destructive states of mind. We shouldn't feel discouraged or hopeless. With strong determination and effort we can diminish the negative states of mind. As the famous Indian master



Ashvagosha said, "You are master of your own self, but you can also be the enemy of yourself."

Whenever we face a problem in life we tend to place the blame externally, i.e. on to other people or objects. But we actually receive more harm from our own negative states of mind than from any external person or object. If we don't challenge and minimise our negative states of mind, then they can destroy us like a real enemy would. We can protect ourselves by challenging the negative states of mind and making an effort to keep our positive states of mind.

The text that we are studying, "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons", teaches us about mind training which is like a weapon for destroying our self-centred and self-cherishing states of mind. The main thrust of the whole text is to overcome the self-cherishing attitude. However, a clarification is needed. Self-cherishing does not mean that you shouldn't look after yourself or value yourself. It is most important that we all value ourselves and look after ourselves as best we can.

The text says that a self-cherishing attitude is destructive. We need to understand what this self-cherishing attitude is and what effect it has on our lives and the lives of the people around us. Then we can see it is the source of all our problems and any harm we receive. The selfcherishing attitude arises when we have a strong grasping or hold onto our own self. Deep within us there is some sense of 'I'. When we hold this 'I' with a selfcherishing attitude we place our needs above others and have no concern about anybody else's needs. There is no room in our minds to even think about caring or helping others.

When this self-cherishing attitude arises we want to gain all benefits for ourselves and not give any portion of the benefit to others. When we have a self-cherishing attitude, all the people around us who support us in life turn into our enemies, or at least start to dislike us. Not only do our friends become enemies, but all other surrounding conditions also become a source of unhappiness and suffering. If, however, we adopt an attitude of cherishing others, rather than cherishing ourselves, the outcome is reversed – all our friends become closer and all the surrounding conditions become a source of happiness.

We can see the difference in our lives between being selfish and being thoughtful of other people's needs. There is great benefit when we show a less selfish mind, and more consideration, towards our family, friends and

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

workmates. When living with others, the best attitude to show the other person is one of care and concern, while reducing our own self-importance. If we don't reduce our selfish mind, our actions will seem uncaring and inconsiderate. People, of course, don't like this and this is one of the main reasons why one partner decides to break off a relationship. When someone just cares about themselves, they can't be trusted. Relationship breakups cause misery and sorrow in our lives. We have to realise that, for the sake of our own future, we can't just always think of ourselves but need to think about other people's needs and win their trust by showing genuine care in our thoughts and actions. For example, you can open your mind and put aside your own needs in order to help someone else in their time of need. They will then realise that you care.

Many problems won't arise if we have a less selfish When we get upset very quickly for minor mind. reasons with a partner or friend, this is a sign of a strong selfish mind. For example, if we get upset when a close friend uses an object we regard as our personal possession, this is a sign of a selfish mind. When we get upset quickly for minor reasons, we can also feel ourselves become proud and arrogant if we think we are in the right. The selfish mind affects both our mental attitudes and our physical actions. When we are motivated or influenced by a selfish mind, we become unpleasant to others. Our speech and even our facial expressions become unpleasant. The selfish mind destroys our whole outlook and personality. As we don't really want to appear selfish, arrogant, shorttempered and uncaring, then we have to change. We replace the self-cherishing mind with a mind that cherishes others and considers their needs. And out of this positive speech and actions will follow.

Wherever we are, whatever we are doing or saying, if we make sure that our motivation considers other people's needs, then our actions will be true spiritual actions. Others will then naturally regard us as good, reliable people with a friendly nature.

Geshe Doga was once travelling by bus from Kathmandu to the great Stupa in Boudanath. There was a woman in the bus sitting next to him with a load of goods. She told him her purse was missing. There was a lot of money in the purse, but what impressed Geshe Doga was that she didn't seem upset or worried. She told Geshe Doga that she hoped the thief would benefit from the money. This woman had a different mental attitude, regardless of whether she was a spiritual practitioner or not; she knew that the money would benefit others just as it had would have benefited herself. With this sort of consideration of others, we can tolerate loss in our own lives and prevent such adverse situations from bringing unease and unhappiness in our minds.

We finish the teaching here. We will now chant the Buddha's mantra. As before, just relax the mind and body and remove all distracting thoughts. As we chant the mantra, just focus the mind on the mantra.

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