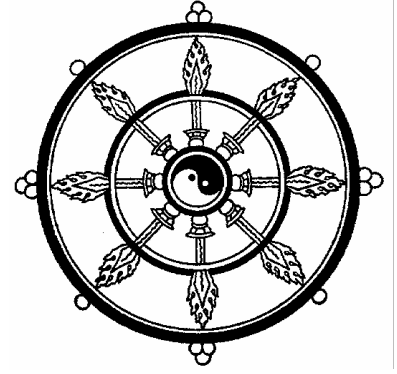


# Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

འཇིགས་མེད་མཚོ་ཆེན་འཕྲིན་ལོ།



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We will do a few minutes breathing meditation together. Make yourself comfortable in a sitting posture and try to fully relax the body. We are doing meditation in order to calm our minds. Physical rest and good health are not enough. It makes a great difference if the mind is peaceful, calm and clear. Problems are brought to the mind by wild thoughts which, when not controlled, can trick our way of thinking and lead us to believe that fantasy is reality. As a result we can find ourselves experiencing frustration, we feel hopeless and disturbed. Through meditation we can remove these uncontrolled thought processes and we can then bring some inner peace, clarity and stability to the mind. So think of meditation as bringing about this inner peace by overcoming all unnecessary thought processes.

Now try to slowly remove all thoughts of external objects. The idea is to fully settle the mind within. Also, we need to realise that, even if the mind is brought inward, it still needs an object to focus on. We will use the breath, focusing on the incoming breath and the outgoing breath. In any meditation practice, when we concentrate and focus the mind on an object, there should be no difference between the mind and the object. It is said that if we try to observe an object with our eyes, then the meditation is not too stable. So we use the incoming and outgoing breath as the object to focus on. The mind can concentrate on the breath as if there is no difference between the mind and the breath, and the mind can actually become one with the breath as if we were the breath. Let us do this breathing meditation for a few minutes.

We practise meditation because it can benefit our lives in such a direct way. Meditation helps us to relax and to develop some self-control and some self-discipline. It helps us to overcome our problems and bring about some positive change in our lives. Meditation mainly involves gaining control over our minds. To understand why it is so important to be able to control our minds, we need to examine how it behaves when we don't have control over it. If we don't discipline and control the mind, then it can always be influenced by the various thoughts. When we watch what these thoughts are doing to our lives, we can see that some of them result in us feeling restless and confused. If we watch these thoughts we can see how stressful and totally useless many of them are. There is no point in keeping these thoughts. However, if we aren't aware of our thoughts, then we can't check to see their effect on our lives. We just keep these thoughts- of unpleasant experiences, the

bad memories - without ever being aware of their destructive nature.

On the other hand, if we can discriminate among our thoughts or states of mind, then we can at least generate and keep the types of thought that are useful and meaningful to our lives. We can then definitely overcome or minimise the states of mind whose only effect is to bring us unhappiness. Meditation practice is about transforming our minds, that is, preventing the mind from having thoughts that have no benefit to us. To do this we engage our minds in a meditation discipline on objects that enhance peace in the mind.

Meditation helps us to make the best use of our minds. If we misuse the energy and capacity of our physical body for harmful actions, then this is negative. Likewise, the mind has a potential that can be used. We try to use this mental energy in the most beneficial way. Through meditation we can experience the kind of peace and happiness that arises within, rather than being dependent upon external causes and objects. In reality we can discover that there is a peace and happiness within ourselves that is more lasting, reliable and more meaningful. And it will give us more confidence and satisfaction in life.

The worldly concept of happiness is associated with external living conditions, like where we live and the type of people we live with, as well as our possessions. Worldly happiness is experienced with our sense consciousness, so it is dependent on external objects. We are not undermining the happiness we get from sense objects, but we do have to realise that this is not the entire meaning of our lives and it is not the best kind of happiness that we can find. It is important to realise and understand this, because many people believe that the purpose of life is finding this outer happiness, which of course differs for different people. For some people it means that they have to possess certain objects, happiness consists just in possessing these objects. Their minds can be fixed on getting an object to the point where they think there is nothing else in their lives. They're deceived by an illusion that this is their only happiness. As a result of the strong belief that the object will bring them happiness, these people will do almost anything to get it, and will go through a great deal of hardship until they possess the object. Even if they finally get the object, it can only give a temporary sense of achievement or pleasure- perhaps for a week, a month, maybe even a year. But like all things external, the

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objects are impermanent and subject to momentary change. When that time comes to lose the object, then it seems that everything, including all hope for happiness, is lost.

So happiness based on outside objects cannot be stable, because we change when that outside object changes. So it becomes easy to get frustrated about life and why we can't find any lasting happiness, no matter how much we do the right thing and put in the effort. We can't control these things because they are simply beyond our control. They change just as we change, from moment to moment. The meaning of life and the goal of happiness lies beyond any material or sensual happiness. We can find this lasting peace and happiness through continuous meditation practice.

Whether you feel good or bad, happy or unhappy is all determined by the state of your mind. We can see this for ourselves if we observe our thoughts. We'll notice that some states of mind give us experiences of peace and happiness, while others make us restless and unhappy. So there is obvious benefit in trying to maintain some states of mind and trying to avoid others, in changing the negative states of mind into more positive states. As we said before, there definitely are states of mind we are better off without, just because they don't have a good effect on our lives. For example, people can undergo great suffering when a partner or close friend rejects them. Of course it is difficult to accept such a situation, but we need to overcome the suffering and misery. But we can't overcome the problem if we maintain a strong desire for that person, but further, if the mind just keeps thinking of the person and all the good things you shared together, there can be no escape from the suffering.

The immediate cause of suffering is thinking about that person. Some people say that the suffering is like a fire burning from inside. One immediate solution is to discipline the mind to not think of that person. Of course in the beginning this is hard because the person has been so close to you, you've grown so used to that person. But if you make an effort to stop thinking about the person - not in terms of whether they've behaved well or badly - but just to understand that your own thought is the immediate cause of your suffering. And this you want to remove. Consider how the one thought (thought of the one object - ed.) can cause such completely different emotions. Remember, that before the separation the thought of this person brought you so much happiness. And think how now, thought of the same person can cause you so much distress. This isn't easy to overcome, so we need a strong determination - otherwise thinking about the person can make us suffer our entire lifetime. If we don't overcome these thoughts, they can be an obstacle to achieving many positive things in life, and we can waste so much time and potential. If only we could overcome these obsessive thoughts right now, we could start a new life with new freedom and happiness.

Meditation is a means of transforming our minds. If we're consistent with this practice of mind training, gradually we can change the habitual negative habits of

the mind. Its like if the mind had form, eventually we can bend it. Recognise the person as an object of distraction and, in meditation, try to stop the distraction and put the mind on the given object for as long as possible, whether it be five minutes or half an hour. If we do this over and over again, then slowly we'll find that the distracting object has less and less influence on our minds. This means that the mind can then sit for longer and longer on the meditation object with less external distractions.

We will now chant the Buddha's mantra seven times. As before, try to adopt a sitting posture, relax the body and bring the mind inward. As we chant the mantra just try to focus the mind on the sound of the mantra.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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