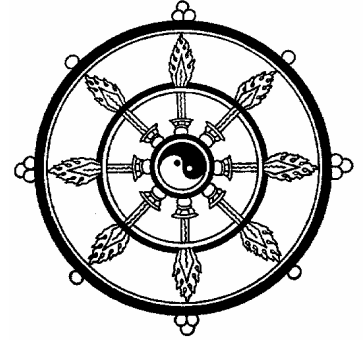

Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

ཨོ ལྷོ་ལྷོ་མཚོ་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



5 November 1998

We will do a few minutes breathing meditation first. Please choose the right sitting posture. The most important thing is that it is comfortable and relaxing for your body.

To find what we always seek in our lives – that is, true peace and happiness – it is important that both our minds and bodies are at rest. With a relaxed, peaceful and happy mind and body, if we examine how to bring more peace and happiness into our lives, we see that we can actually achieve it.

Only when both the mind and body are at rest can the self or person who possesses the mind and body truly feel at rest. Our minds don't automatically rest with the body. While we find it not too hard to rest physically, it is not as easy to rest mentally. Therefore, we have to examine what stops the mind from resting. One obvious cause is that the mind doesn't stay with us – even if we physically rest, the mind doesn't stay with the body. It is important to acknowledge, before we engage in meditation, that the purpose of our practice is to train the mind.

In fact, 'meditation' in Tibetan literally means 'to familiarise' or 'to get used to'. We have to know, through meditation practice, what is the thing we have to become familiar with, to become used to. First, we have to consider what mental habits the mind has. The mind has a habit of wandering outside, never staying within but always going outside. Because of this habitual distraction, even when you say to yourself, 'I want to rest, I want to be at peace', and physically stop doing things and try to release tension, you find don't feel fully comfortable and at peace. If we investigate, we know that the body is resting. So the only thing we have to investigate is the mind, because if both body and mind are resting, there is no other cause for not feeling at peace.

When we investigate the mind, we can see it is still busy with thoughts of external objects, and is not here with us. To be truly at peace, we have to remove all thoughts of external objects, and bring the mind fully inward. Engaging in meditation practice, we remember that this practice is a means to train the mind so that it can stay inward, and not be influenced by external distractions. We are trying to achieve an inner ability by which we can control the mind whenever we want, in the same way that we can stop our body doing work. This is what meditation practice is about.

Just as we are responsible for maintaining good health of

the body, we are responsible for maintaining good health of the mind. In simple terms, we know what is good for our physical health and what is harmful to us. With the things we eat or drink, we have to consider not only the immediate effects, but also the long-term effects. If you have an addiction to drugs, smoking or alcohol, you have to think beyond any immediate enjoyment, such as relaxing the body. You have to consider the long-term effects, and understand that some addictions can, in the long run, damage your physical health. Of course, when you decide to get rid of an addiction, you find that some addictions are not easy to get rid of because your physical system has become addicted over a long time. But we can break that habit completely by making a consistent effort and, with enough determination, you can be completely rid of this bad habit.

In the same way, when we examine the mind we can see that the cause of our dissatisfaction, restlessness, unhappiness and anxiety is not external. We can find the cause within the mind, so it is important to observe the mind to discover which attitudes one should keep, and which one should not keep. It is as simple as identifying those states of mind that benefit us, and those that are harmful and bring unhappiness. If you have had a certain type of thought for a long time that causes unhappiness – disturbing your mental stability and your ability to think properly and concentrate – because that thought is harming rather than benefiting you, it is better not to have it. As said before, just as having an addiction like smoking for a long time makes it harder to eliminate, likewise even though you do not want a harmful thought, it will not go just because you want it to leave your mind.

If we consider how to get rid of this unwanted thought, the only means is meditation practice. Some people have a problem with unfulfilled desire or attachment. To remove or even reduce this problem, the only way is meditation practice. The bottom line or goal of meditation practice is to bring about positive change within our minds. If you can imagine getting rid of all the states of mind and emotions that cause you problems and inner instability, it would create a calm atmosphere within you. So if you can develop a positive state of mind, a good heart, to replace the negative states of mind you used to have, it will immediately bring peace and happiness to the mind and have a positive impact on your life, your mental attitude and all your actions.

We will now begin this breathing meditation. Just relax the body and try to make sure that the mind rests fully

inward by removing all outgoing thoughts. After doing this, just focus the mind on the out-breath and in-breath.

Geshe Doga is wondering whether any of you have a question to ask. He wants only two questions, otherwise we might have to stay here the whole night!

Answer to first question: If your question is 'what are the specific benefits or advantages of using the mantra as an object of mental concentration?', to fully answer this question we have to take into account the secret mantra teachings, in which there is a meditation called the 'vajra recitation'. It is said that there is a specific benefit of purifying negativities within your mind. Also, concentrating on the mantra or any object has the benefits of attaining the single-pointed state of calm-abiding. Having attained that state of calm-abiding, you can attain the state of special insight and can receive the benefits of this as a result of achieving single-pointed state of meditation.

As you make progress in your concentration, both your mind and body become very supple and pliable. It is said that you can experience some sort of physical and mental bliss in conjunction with this mental and physical pliancy.

Answer to second question: The Buddha's mantra, which is 'Om Muni Muni Maha Munaye Soha' begins with the mantra 'Om'. Om has many meanings. Generally, Om is regarded as the beginning of a mantra and is also a symbol of the ultimate qualities of the Buddha, of fully enlightened beings. When you say 'Om' it seems like one sound. But if you split that sound, there are three, which represent the three kayas or the three bodies – the holy body, speech and mind – of a fully enlightened being. Therefore, the benefit of saying this mantra is that it implants in one's mind the seed to achieve the perfect body and speech and mind of a fully enlightened being.

'Muni' means victorious, and 'Maha' means 'great' victorious, referring to Shakyamuni, the Lord Buddha, who is called 'victorious' [Muni] and 'great victorious' [Maha] in the sense that he has subdued all mental delusions, attained the state of liberation, or foe-destroyer of the lesser vehicle, which is the hearer vehicle and solitary vehicle. Further, 'great victorious' means not only that he has reached the state of foe-destroyer by overcoming all obstructions to liberation from cyclic existence or samsara, but he has also overcome the obscurations to omniscient mind. So not only has he achieved the state of liberation of the two lesser vehicles, but also of the great vehicle, the state of complete enlightenment.

Finally, the 'Soha', which we quite often see attached to the end of mantras, literally means 'something stabilised' – all the qualities that a fully enlightened being has achieved abide in an everlasting, permanent state of perfection.

This just briefly explains the meaning of the Buddha's mantra. Now we will finish with the chanting of this mantra. As before, sit in the meditation posture, making sure your body and mind are fully relaxed and, as we chant it, focus your mind on the mantra.

*Transcribed from the tapes by Jenny Brooks
Edited by Mary-Lou Considine
Edit checked against the tapes by Richard Garward
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*