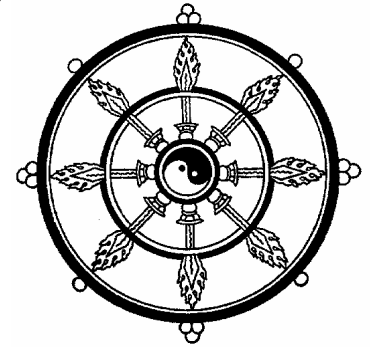

Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering



ཨོ རྩ་སྤྱོད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།

16 December 1998

As usual we will do a short breathing meditation together.

It is very beneficial to integrate this meditation practice in our everyday life, because one of the benefits of this practice is that we increase our knowledge of the reality of our own self and our actions.

Meditation practice involves focusing on one's own mind. For instance if we watch our thoughts there is a lot to learn about our mind and ourselves. We see that while we may have much knowledge of external things we have very little knowledge of our own mind. A better understanding of our own mind and self can help our sense of judgement. Because we understand what is beneficial and what is harmful to our life, it helps us to choose the right direction in our life.

Meditation practice is about training our mind and ourselves. Why does our mind needs training? If we examine it, we see there are many faults in our way of thinking and in our attitudes. Our mind has many good habits, patterns and qualities, but we also have negative habits and qualities.

We need to understand that the more negative states of mind we have, then the more dissatisfaction, unhappiness and confusion there is in our life. On the other hand producing more positive states of mind will produce more happiness, peace and stability. If there is one force that controls us, it is our mind, and the types of action we do are predetermined by the states of mind that exist within us.

The most beneficial way of learning about our mind, and ourself is watching our thoughts. Then we can understand its influence. Each state of mind or thought can influence our emotions and thoughts and the types of actions we undertake. If we think like this we gain an understanding which we can call true knowledge, and this enables us to see within ourselves two states of mind: one is very beneficial, creative and positive and the other state of mind is destructive for us.

If we can cultivate this knowledge of our mind and our self, then we know how to put it into practice. Our understanding of our mind tells us what is the right thing to do and what is not the right thing. So our practice is making an effort to put this into practice, and finding the best means of doing so. As a result of making

such a consistent effort, we develop more positive states of mind, and are able to decrease the negative states of mind and actions. If we do this, the effect of this practice will be to find more happiness, peace and inner stability.

As said before we have to see the meditation practice that we choose to do as mind training. The most fundamental thing about engaging in this meditation practice is, as said before, that it is about knowing our own mind. So in practice the focus is on one's own mind and life. With a clear picture of what is beneficial and what is harmful to one's life, and the aim behind all our actions, we can see one way to understand our mind and how to train it. It is similar to how we decide what is good and what is bad in respect to external things such as friends. We choose to see some people as good friends and others as not good to have as friends. There are good reasons for this, and we make every effort to try to make the acquaintance of good friends.

In our mind there is a friend-like mind and an enemy-like mind. The enemy-like mind motivates us to do harmful actions and is the cause of bringing unhappiness to our life. When we have some understanding within our mind can recognise that of the various states of mind that we experience there are positive and negative states of mind. Meditation practice is training to retain and cultivate positive states of mind, whilst at the same time diminishing the negative states of mind. Even just by being mindful of our mind we can be aware of any negative state that arises. We can see how very forceful and strong it can be. Being aware of that mind we feel bad about it, and feel alarm that it is there. Even just doing that can weaken the detrimental force of that mind.

Meditation literally means 'the practice of getting used to' or 'familiarising ourselves with something'. Meditation practice is familiarising ourselves with knowledge of negative states of mind, and practising the elimination of those negative thoughts, whilst at the same time cultivating positive states of mind. If there are any unhappy, disturbed states of mind we work out how to counteract them, and how to protect our inner peace and positive state of mind from any other harm. If we can do this we can bring more happiness in our mind. Therefore it is very important to get used to this practice of mind training, or how to calm our mind.

The happiness we seek in our life is very much dependent on the right conditions in our mind. If we think about it, the purpose of our life is happiness. If we find happiness then we literally have no use for other things, even the job we have becomes meaningless. Without happiness there is no meaning to our life.

There are two main conditions that bring happiness: the health of our body and the health of our mind. If we enjoy a healthy and pure mind then there is happiness. If the work we do is the cause of some physical risk to our health, then whatever we achieve from our work has little value. If we do not enjoy good health this leads to many other problems.

So we basically have to ask, "What is the true means of bringing happiness?" We do not ask this because we don't know what happiness means and we are not doing anything about it. In fact everything we do in life is pursuit of some benefit to ourself. In the back of our mind even being angry with another or showing a frowning face to others, is because we believe that it will bring some benefit to us. In fact actions like these are the cause of future problems. We need to put some effort into understanding our mind and controlling, or training it.

As said before, the two main most important conditions for finding happiness in our life are physical health and a sound, very clear mind. In other words we have find for ourselves the necessary external and internal conditions for living life happily and with satisfaction. We also have to have a good knowledge of our own life and of our own self. In our life we experience both happiness, and problems and suffering. We have to know the main causes of these experiences, which is not that difficult. We know that certain emotions make us sad and unhappy and other feelings make us happy, calm and peaceful. As we do not want any unhappy experience we have to be very clear, because unhappiness is not always caused by external conditions. Rather it is caused by our own emotions.

If we do not want these unhappy emotions and sadness to continue we have to overcome these thoughts. Therefore there are some thoughts it is better for us to forget about. In theory this is very simple, but in practice it is not at all easy. Some people find it extremely difficult to leave behind some past memory, or past thought. Then there is the situation where hen we face some problem in our practice and we say, "I cannot do this." Then we cannot do the practice. So it is very important to generate a strong determination and continuously make an effort to counteract and challenge those thoughts of defeat.

If you maintain the practice of counteracting negative thoughts for a long time then you can achieve what you want to achieve. On top of that cultivating a strong sense of self-responsibility through this practice develops strong spirit and courage.

At a young age it is very important to cultivate this sense

of self-responsibility, this sense that that it is your responsibility in life to overcome and solve all your problems and achieve what you want to achieve.

In the early part of life we are dependent upon our parents. If we don't lose our dependence on others as adults we won't develop the self-responsibility to even focus on our own life and take responsibility for ourselves. As I say to teenagers, "Instead of depending on your parents you should think of how you can help your parents". [That is the start of self-responsibility.]

This self-responsibility can be a cause to be more focussed on one's life. To be successful we need a focus and discipline. Even in mundane life see people who have a vision, and who have the courage to fulfil that vision. When they have opportunities they direct all their focus onto that vision. They can discipline their life to achieve their goals, and boost their self-confidence even more. In this way they continuously develop and progress.

Yet there are others who lack the clear direction do one thing. Then move on to something else. In the end they lose self-confidence. All they can talk about is failure, saying "I did this but I did not achieve anything". If you do start something and don't complete it, then start something else, and that is not completed either, it affects self-confidence, and in a way condemns one's actions.

When talking about meditation or spiritual practice we can't keep spiritual matters separate from the needs of this life. Therefore we have to see our goal or aim as living a very happy life. To live such a happy life the main conditions are good material conditions, good physical health and on top of that a good state of mind. To be realistic, if our health declines it will be very difficult for us to be happy. Likewise if we enjoy a very sound and fit body but our mind is not happy, then there is suffering and problems in life. This suffering is not due to physical factors but mental ones, and this can cause physical discomfort. Some very fit and healthy people can feel something is wrong with their body. This can be due to their mental state affecting health of their body. It is similar with material conditions, with the exception of highly realised practitioners who can possess nothing, yet feel absolute peace. In our case if we are deprived of a lot of material possessions we experience suffering. The best way is to integrate spiritual practice into our life, not thinking that they are two separate things.

*Transcribed from the tapes by Kathi Melnic
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Edited Version*

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