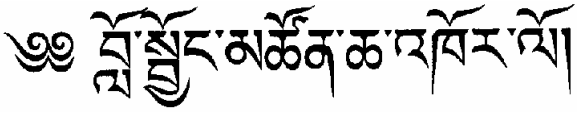

Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

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First of all we shall do a few minutes of breathing meditation together.

Just put yourself in the most comfortable sitting posture, and make sure that your body is completely relaxed.

Not only should we try to relax ourselves physically, but we should also try to relax ourselves mentally, because when both our mind and body are at rest then we can feel ourselves at rest. Therefore try to think of resting one's mind as well.

Try to understand that resting one's mind and body is not the goal of meditation. Rather it is the means of meditation. Therefore what we have to think of achieving in our meditation after resting both our mind and body, is bringing about some transformation within our mind. We need to cultivate and develop more understanding of the mind and its potential. We have to understand that there are some parts of our mind that we need to change, because they are very unhealthy.

With this knowledge we can try to develop our mind in relation to both worldly knowledge and one's own life. Through working with our mind we can gain a better and more complete understanding of our life, and all the situations around us. Based on this knowledge we can live our life more skilfully, more meaningfully and more happily.

The purpose of meditation is not just to put the mind into some neutral state of peace, or to numb one's mind. Rather the main purpose is to work within one's mind, trying to remove and break all its bad habits and thought patterns, to bring about a positive change and outlook.

We are trying to learn something from our meditation that can be applied to any other purpose, or situation in our life. As said before, what meditation practice involves is not just shutting out the outside world, and staying in some inner peace. It is important that in our meditation our mind is very awake and alert, and able to recognise what is disturbing its peace.

We need to recognise the obstacles that prevent or interfere with this peace. Then we should try to think of some remedy to overcome those obstacles, and in the actual meditation try to become familiar with that particular remedy. In this way our meditation practice has the benefit of developing more mental concentration, because what disturbs our mind is usually some form of disturbing or distracting thought.

Therefore in meditation we try to train ourselves to challenge and overcome the influence of the disturbing thoughts in our mind. The way to do this is by training our mind to concentrate on some specific object or topic, and try to fix the mind there. As we make progress in meditation then we gain more control over our mind, in the sense that we are not allowing the mind to be distracted, or to be carried away by any other thought. Rather we manage our mind in the way we want it.

If we develop the ability to control our mind, then we can apply this same technique of mind control to overcome any cause that which disturbs our mind, especially those that affect the clarity, the clear thinking and the very focus of the mind.

Meditation is so very useful. It is something that is not just for religious practitioners. The basic benefit of meditation is stabilising our mind, and increasing our power of memory and mindfulness. It also has the benefit of bringing inner clarity and peace to the mind.

With all these advantages meditation can be used for any purpose, in any situation, even just to achieve some sort of very mundane purpose. Sometimes we need that clarity in order to work effectively and so on. So it is important that we have the focus and the mental concentration to have a very clear mind. If our mind is not clear and stable then you know how things become much harder - even the mundane purposes in our life.

Could we now begin the breathing meditation? As said before, just make sure that you relax yourself both mentally and physically, and try to get rid of all distracting thoughts. Then try to put all one's focus on the incoming and outgoing breath.

(pause for meditation)

We can enjoy more of what we are doing when if our mind is fully concentrated and directed. For instance suppose someone is really enjoying a particular program on TV, with their mind really focused and concentrated on that program. If any one interrupts them, they become very upset, because they lose that enjoyment. With meditation practice we can develop more concentration, and then utilise that concentration to whatever activity that we do in our life. If you do that, then you can find more meaning and pleasure from that activity.

Let us now return to the teaching on the mind training called *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons* by the famous Indian master Dharmarakshita. Last time we finished the first half of verse 52. The other half of that verse says:

This sly, deadly villain - the selfishness in us,
Deceiving ourselves and all others as well

Here the text is showing us the wrong view of self grasping that gives us misapprehensions of reality, and the self-cherishing attitude that is the self-centred view. These two, it says, are not only the cause of binding one to this unending existence of suffering that we call samsara, or cyclic existence. These two are also, it says, the main cause of not being able to achieve any purpose for oneself, or for other beings.

This verse is showing us the disadvantages of having a self-cherishing attitude. If one thinks about this, then it is saying that one doesn't necessarily have to think of the disadvantages in terms of future lives, or achieving some higher goal. Even in our day-to-day life, then we can see that having this self-

cherishing mind is a great obstacle and disadvantage for us. We have to understand how this self-cherishing mind is very deceptive and misleads us.

What it is actually doing, is continuously bringing harm to our life, and influencing us to bring harm upon other beings. As you can see, it is the source of all the misfortune and all the unwanted things that eventuate in our life, even the problems in our relationships.

If we have a good harmonious relationship with others, then we need to work at maintaining that harmony. Otherwise we will be isolated, even though we want very much to be part of a community. There may be people who we admire, but this self-cherishing mind isolates us from them. For instance if there is a group of five or six people who are very close, and if one of them is influenced by this self-cherishing mind, then that can cause disharmony. It can even completely destroy that group harmony. Not only does it bring disharmony to other people, but it brings it to oneself.

The opposite to this self-cherishing mind is the mind that cherishes other beings. This mind is unlike the self-cherishing mind, which always think of one's own needs, and always thinks about oneself. The mind that cherishes others thinks of others, their needs, and their situation.

If we examine of these two mental attitudes, which one is healthy one? Which one is a cause to maintain harmony in one's relationships? Which one destroys the harmony in relationships? We can understand the answer to those questions very easily.

If we understand more about what the self-cherishing mind is doing to us we see the influence that it has on the actions that we perform in our life. We realise that all these actions are influenced by our self-cherishing mind. They not necessarily important for other people, or even for one's own self. In this way we can see for how long, and by how much this self-cherishing mind has been deceiving and misleading us.

Of course if we think in terms of qualities like cultivating love and compassion for others, or providing some help or service to other beings, then of course this the self-cherishing mind is the main obstacle. Do you know why? It is because we are not able to show enough love and compassion to other beings, and we do not do enough to benefit other beings. Even those actions that we have directed to the benefit of other beings are not as fruitful or beneficial as they should be. We can see that it is because of the influence of this self-cherishing mind.

The way this self-cherishing mind makes us think is that we always want everything to be on our side, and for everything to be favourable to our needs. Nor do we want to take any loss from other people. We have to think about whether this is going to be a useful mental attitude to accomplish what we want in our life. In other words, what we always want is happiness, and to avoid unhappiness or suffering.

With a self-cherishing mind then how can we think of achieving happiness. Is that a realistic way of thinking? If we examine it, then we can understand that we should think of an opposite to the way of thinking of this self-cherishing mind. That is, to consider giving, of taking a loss upon oneself, tolerating the harm you know that the other person will cause you. By giving some victory to them, and even forgetting about one's own problems or convenience, you think of giving some sort of support to others, and giving them some happiness.

If we take this way of thinking into our life, like for instance living very harmoniously with others, then we can see the advantages of showing some tolerance, and taking up some

loss upon oneself. In the long run, this has more personal benefit. We also have to see that it is impossible for us to always be in a win-win situation. Therefore we should try to think of the benefit of changing our way of thinking now. Our present way of thinking is based on this self-cherishing mind, which as I have said before, is always centred just on one's own self.

Even in your family or in a group, you always talk about your own self interest, focussing on what is not agreeable to oneself. That is not good for you. It is like being in a meeting, and rather than focusing on the what is good or bad for the whole group or organization, saying 'I' rather than 'we'. You might then focus on an aspect of the issue that is not good for the organization.

If you do the same thing for yourself, then even though you are not removed from the all the other members of the group, you feel that you are apart from them. That is because of your self-cherishing mind which singles you out, and removes you from that group.

If you also think about this in terms of maintaining a good relationship, then it is obvious how important it is to be aware of the shortcomings of having this strong self-cherishing mind. It is important to try to think of the benefit of the mind of cherishing other beings and considering their needs. The cherishing mind can cause relationships to last. You can develop true harmony and bring mutual benefit to a relationship. With that mind, it is possible to practise more tolerance, and more patience.

When we have that mind of cherishing others then one can sometimes forget about one's own problems and needs, and put the other person's need first. If other person is undergoing stress or problems, then you are able to give them some support, rather than expecting that person to support you. If you had the same problems, you would want their support. With a self-cherishing mind then you ask yourself, 'Why do I have to support them, because I also have the same problems and difficulties'. You can see how in a certain circumstance, some small help and support that we give to others by sacrificing our own need, can then be a good cause to stabilise one's life in the long run.

So it is in relation to the disadvantages of this self-cherishing mind, the mind that fulfils one's own need and purpose that the verse says,

Capture him, capture him.

Here 'him' refers to the self-cherishing mind.

Capture him, fierce Yamantaka,
Summon this enemy, bring him forth now!

Recognising all these faults of the self-cherishing mind, in this verse the writer prays to his meditational deity, Yamantaka, to capture and destroy that enemy.

That's the teaching for tonight. Now we going to chant the Buddha's mantra seven times. While chanting the mantra try to sit in a relaxed meditation posture. Bring the mind inward, and then we focus the mind on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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