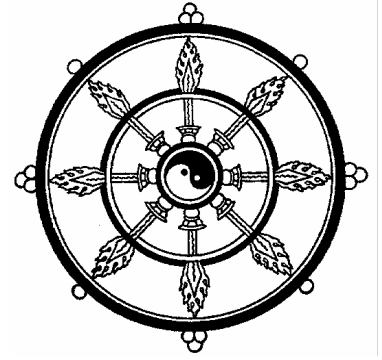


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

ཨོ ལྷོ་སྤྱད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



25 October 2000

As usual, we will do the breathing meditation first. Regardless of the duration of your meditation, it's important that you adopt the right physical posture. The traditional meditation posture is known as the cross-legged posture of Vairocana Buddha, which is characterised by seven features. (Note: in some texts, the posture is said to have eight features, because the breath is included – i.e. 1 legs, 2 hands, 3 back, 4 teeth lips & tongue, 5 head, 6 eyes, 7 shoulders, 8 breath).

Firstly, both your legs should be crossed. The benefit of adopting this cross-legged posture is that it is said to be effective in enhancing what we call the bliss of 'pliancy', or physical suppleness. It enables one to stay in the meditation posture for a long period of time without getting too tired. This posture is also said to express a peaceful countenance that will inspire peace in the mind of other beings.

Next, the back of your body should be straight. The benefit of this that it prevents sleepiness, and also prevents the arising of mental dullness, which can impede one's meditation practice. When we assume the meditation posture with a straight back, it also makes all the body's psychic channels straight, allowing the wind or energy to flow more easily through these channels.

Your two hands should be placed one above the other just below the navel, with the two thumbs touching and pointing towards the navel. This feature is said to be a ripening cause for achieving the completion stages of tantra.

Next, your mouth, teeth and lips should be as relaxed as possible. If the mouth is closed too tightly, it makes it hard to breathe in and out. On the other hand, if it's opened too wide, it can also make breathing through your nose too forced. Therefore, your mouth and lips should neither be too open nor too tightly closed, but should be as relaxed and natural as possible.

The tip of the tongue should just touch the upper palate. The point of doing this is to prevent the mouth from drying out, and excess saliva from dribbling out of the mouth. This can happen when you sit in meditation for a long period of time.

Your eyes should be slightly open, but not too wide. If the eyes are open too wide, your mind will fall under the influence of distractions or excitement. If they are too tightly closed, this can bring dullness to your mind. Therefore, the eyes should be slightly open and gazing towards the tip of your nose.

Your head should be slightly bent forward. This helps balance the psychic channels – it is said that if the head is

held up straight, the channels are upright, which can disturb your physical energy state, and consequently disturb your mind.

Both shoulders should be level, and positioned in such a way that your arms do not actually touch the sides of your body, but leave a gap between the arms and body. This feature is said to prevent one of the obstacles to meditation known as 'mental sinking'.

It is said that the benefit of adopting this seven-point posture is that we will achieve the state of Vairocana Buddha in future. If we plan to pursue meditation practice for a long time, then getting used to this posture is very beneficial.

However, it is also said that the posture you adopt to practise meditation depends on which one is most suitable for you.

After adopting the right physical posture, we must adopt the right frame of mind. This means cultivating a good motivation at the beginning of the meditation practice. To cultivate the right motivation, one needs to focus one's mind and try to change the frame of mind from a negative one to a positive one.

The best or supreme motivation is to think that: "By doing this meditation practice, may I benefit all other sentient beings". At the very least, one should generate the thought that "By doing this meditation practice, may I really calm my mind". Then try to recall how, through calming your mind, you can achieve personal peace and happiness. Then how, having achieved peace and happiness in one's personal life, one would be able to bring the same benefit to other beings.

The order of conducting a meditation practice is that first, one should adopt the right sitting posture, making sure the body is fully relaxed. Then, one should focus the mind on trying to generate the proper motivation – that is, why you are doing this practice, what you are trying to achieve, etc. Next, as you begin the practice, try to initially settle the mind inward by preventing it from thinking about other things. Then, one can begin the actual meditation.

The one we do here is breathing meditation practice. In this meditation practice, we simply direct the mind's focus on the in-breath and out-breath, as much as possible maintain our focus single-pointedly on the breath by overcoming any distractions that arise during the meditation. We will now do this meditation for a few minutes. [Pause for meditation.]

We will now go over the text, *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*.

We are up to the verse 102, which reads:

Then may even hell beings develop clairvoyance
And take higher rebirths as men or as gods.
By developing strongly the wish to be Buddhas,
May they pay back our kindness through heeding the
teachings
And regard us as gurus with confident trust.

This is also the prayer of the Bodhisattvas, who are great, noble beings. In the previous verse, the Bodhisattva or great noble being prayed to be born in the hell realms in order to rescue those beings who have taken rebirth there and benefit them. In this verse, the Bodhisattva's prayer is that, having been born in the hell realms and having given the profound spiritual teachings to beings there, may the effect of their teachings be so powerful that all beings in the hell realms will achieve all the spiritual qualities and swiftly achieve the state of Buddhahood.

The Bodhisattva prays that beings in the hell realms will acquire spiritual qualities, such as the clairvoyant power of reading the minds of other beings, or the power to retain intact everything they have learned in the past. Then, through these qualities attained through the power of the Bodhisattva's teachings, may the beings in the hell realms immediately transcend their old life and attain the perfect life of a human or godly being.

The prayer continues that, having found an excellent rebirth, may those beings in that very lifetime progress through all the spiritual stages of the Mahayana (Great Vehicle) path. Further, may they experience no delays in their journey to the state of Buddhahood or complete enlightenment that would be caused by pursuing the practices of the Lesser Vehicles. Rather, may they follow the Mahayana path, such as the practice of the six perfections, the four means of gathering disciples, and so on. Then, may all those beings achieve the state of Buddhahood.

The instruction here is that we should also make the same prayer as the Bodhisattvas. It is hard to perceive the result or power of making prayers. However, whatever our prayers may be, there will be a time when they will come true. Therefore, it is especially important that, at the end of the day or at the end of our practice, we dedicate whatever virtues or merit we may have accumulated through our practices by making prayers such as those above.

If we follow the meaning of the prayer in this verse, we should dedicate our practice with the thought that: "May all beings subject to the suffering of lower rebirths such as the hell realms be immediately freed from those rebirths and move to the higher rebirth of a human or godly being".

Then pray that: "May I then be able to be a perfect spiritual guide to these beings from the hell realms who are reborn as human or godly beings. Further, may they be perfect vessels for the teachings, so that they will make swift progress, taking up all the Bodhisattvas' practices from the start, such as generating the bodhicitta mind. Motivated by that mind, may they successfully accomplish all the Bodhisattvas' deeds". So, you pray that not only will they make quick progress to the state of

Buddhahood, but that they will also become perfect spiritual guides themselves, and be in a perfect position to guide all other beings.

To some extent, in such prayers we can find the answers to a lot of things in our lives that we cannot fully understand- for example, the way that the law of karma or cause and effect operates. Even if you cannot pray like this for all other beings, try to think of those beings who are close to you, even if it is just a pet - a cat or dog - whoever or whatever you are fond of, try to include them in your prayers. As you pray, you will create the cause for some result. You can think that even in the immediate future it might bear a result. Or, if that was not to happen, you can at least think that the prayer will definitely bear a result in a future life.

The lesson here is that we should try to follow the example of Bodhisattvas when we pray as part of our practice.

From the spiritual teachings, we learn not only how to develop good qualities within ourselves - which is like our inner wealth - but also how to share that wealth, how to use it to benefit other beings.

We all know how to develop outer wealth and how to distribute it properly to other beings. But spiritual practice opens our eyes to the wealth within us. Therefore, even if we do not have any outer wealth, we can always feel that we are able to benefit and help other beings. It's very important to think about how we will use the spiritual qualities we develop through our practice to benefit other beings. If we keep thinking about benefiting other beings, eventually we will be in a position to actually use our qualities to benefit them.

For example, when children are taught to serve their country, and are instilled with some sense of nationalism or patriotism, it can motivate them to study and work harder, so that they will be able to be of great service to the nation and to all humanity. If they study with the strong aspiration to benefit other beings and serve their country, one day they will be able to become a great leader, someone who will be able to extensively benefit their country. Whereas, if you think of someone who, from an early age, is always self-centred and all their efforts are directed at achieving their own purposes, the scope of what they can achieve in their life will be limited.

We will leave the teaching here. Now, we'll chant the Buddha's mantra. As we did earlier, before we begin the chanting, we should adopt the meditation posture and make ourselves comfortable. We should also make sure that our mind is also completely settled inward by removing all distracting thoughts. As we begin chanting, we should try to place the mind's focus on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

*Transcribed from the tapes by Gabrielle Thomson
Edited by Mary-Lou Considine
Edited checked by Sandup Tsering
Edited Version*

© **Tara Institute**
