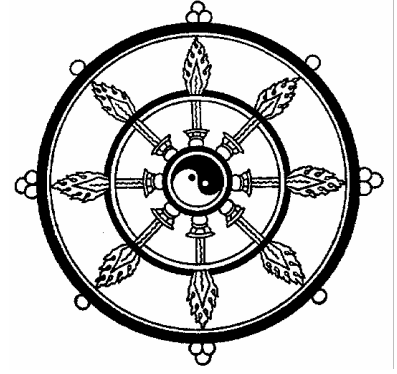


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

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10 December 1997

As usual we will begin with a breathing meditation. Choose a suitable sitting posture, making sure that your back is straight and your body is relaxed. We can then find some peace and relaxation. Physically we may be relaxed, but still we find that the mind is not. This is because it is still busy wandering after various external objects. The mind is still influenced by outer distractions. So it is important to relax our minds by getting rid of all the distracting thoughts. After bringing the mind inward, begin the meditation by focussing the mind on your breath as it flows in and out through the nostrils. Make every effort not to allow the mind to leave the breath.

We can achieve happiness by gaining control over our minds. It is beneficial for us to apply this practice of mind training, where we focus on our mind and what it is doing. This is something we can do, and understand, for ourselves. We can see that unhappiness can arise out of not being able to control the mind and letting it just wander endlessly outside. As Buddha said, you are master of your self, no one else can be your master. We are fully responsible for our own mental and physical well being. There is not much hope of receiving help from others.

If we see our physical health as important, then there are things we must do to make it happen. Likewise, if we see the health and happiness of our minds as being important, then we have to create the causes ourselves. We all have the gift of knowledge. If we use our skills to apply our knowledge, we can easily see what is harmful and what is beneficial to our bodies and to our minds. Physically, we can make sure that we don't suffer due to thirst, hunger or lack of shelter. We are equally responsible for our mental well being. Just as we make sure that we aren't deprived of any physical comforts, we can also ensure that our mind is not deprived of happiness or comfort. In short, it is important for us to recognise our own potential and knowledge. On the basis of this knowledge, we should do our best to ensure the good health of our body and mind.

Geshe Doga is always telling people the same thing - the importance of our good mental and physical health. This is so important because these are goals desired by all people, whether or not they are religious. For some the main concern is to just enjoy this life- others, like the religious practitioner, look for happiness in future lives. Everybody has a goal that they want to achieve, either in this life or in future lives. So we have to think about

what we need to do from our own side to fulfill our goals. The most basic and important condition we need in order to fulfill our goal is our physical health. For instance, we may have a strong interest in meditation practices and choose this path to seek peace and happiness. But poor health makes it difficult for us to practice not only meditation, but also many other activities that bring us pleasure in life. It is important to recognise the value of our physical health. It is like a jewel that can fulfil all our goals. So we have to try to look after our bodies. Good physical health is a basic condition for us to achieve anything in life.

However, as was mentioned before, our day to day peace and happiness not only depends on our good health, but also depends very much on a relaxed mind. We need to focus on both physical and mental well being. Physically, we can rest, observe good hygiene and not overload ourselves with physical work. But focussing on our bodies is different from focussing on our minds. The body can only do one thing at any given moment. Our minds, however, can do many activities at any given time. Therefore it is necessary for us to observe and be familiar with the mind in order for us to rest it. We need to minimise any unnecessary mental activities.

It was mentioned earlier that no matter what beliefs we have in life and what goals we set ourselves, our fundamental wish is to always have mental and physical happiness. Most people achieve good health with some kind of daily effort. In addition to this we should also practice meditation on a regular basis. The type and length of practice is something each individual decides to best suit their own mind.

We can live a good life in this way, enjoying good health and a measure of peace, happiness and contentment in our minds. As far as Geshe Doga can see, people who live life this way, even if they don't look rich or dress well, live a satisfying and fulfilling life. Geshe Doga feels sorry for people who externally appear to be leading an affluent life, but when they look within, their whole life is a carry bag of disappointment, suffering and pain.

Geshe Doga says he spoke a lot about physical health tonight because we are nearing Christmas and the New Year. Tonight's talk is especially for those people who have given up smoking and drinking. And those that are fond of these habits should not overindulge. It is important to be our own guardian. It is natural for others, including friends, to encourage us to drink and smoke. Whether or not we accept is up to us. We have

to consider whether these things are good for us or not, especially young people, who need to think more seriously about these habits. Usually the first taste of alcohol or the first smoke of a cigarette is out of curiosity or out of fun. But when you get used to these habits, they're difficult to break, even though you know it is putting your health at risk and draining your finances.

It is good for young people who haven't developed these habits to find, and learn from, older people who have health problems or a life threatening disease as a result of a lifetime of smoking or drinking. Could you accept this, or even bear this if it happened to you? Some people spend about \$45 a week on smoking or \$75 a week on drinking. This is over \$100 a week for something which is having a bad effect on your health in the long run. So, thinking of all these things, we should avoid smoking and drinking for the sake of maintaining our good health.

We will now chant the Buddha's mantra. As before, choose a sitting posture, relax the body and calm the mind inwardly. Use the mantra as the object of focus for our mind.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA