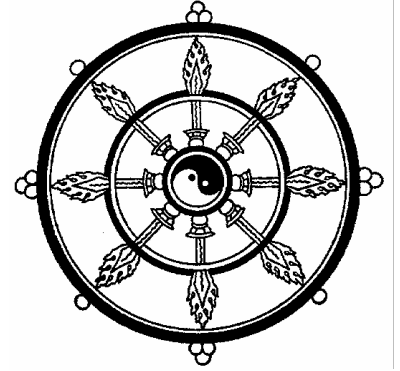


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

ཨོ ལྷོ་ལྷོ་རྒྱུ་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



18 November 1998

We will do some breathing meditation together. If we think about seeking mental or physical happiness, physical happiness happens when we are physically relaxed, and mental happiness comes about when the mind is brought under control, or brought inwards.

Usually, we think that finding happiness or relaxation depends on finding the right external conditions. But not even physical happiness is guaranteed by finding these conditions. With the mind, rather than thinking that our happiness depends on finding the right conditions, we can understand mental happiness and peace to be something that we can achieve by creating the cause within ourselves. If we bring the mind inward, we can calm and relax it, and by doing this we can achieve peace and happiness.

Each one of us is responsible for our own happiness, its in our own hands. Yet, despite the continuous effort we put in - always keeping ourselves busy, always engaged in doing something - somehow we are not even satisfied with the level of peace, happiness and rest that we achieve from our effort. The reason is that all the effort we put into our search for more happiness and peace is directed more towards external success. We are so used to the worldly idea that to be happy, you have to be physically happy and healthy, or mentally to be satisfied, you have to achieve goals, to accumulate conditions.

We never consider that our minds could experience more peace and inner happiness if we could rather calm our minds, and control our thoughts and our emotions.

Instead we believe that the endless thoughts, dreams and fantasies that grow in our minds are going to lead us to more happiness. So the mind is always distracted, and occupied with various objects. As long as external objects are presented to us as happiness and satisfaction, then because we do not, in reality, possess every object desired by our minds, there is no end to what we can fantasise and dream about. We feel that our life is lacking, that there is not enough. This can happen no matter how much you possess, or how much knowledge or power you have achieved. You can still feel discontented, that there is not enough. If we do not control this mind and bring it inward, our life can be devoid of true happiness and satisfaction.

Just as with any other activity, meditation practice is something we do to find more peace, more happiness and more satisfaction. Through meditation, we find that our ideas and actions are different from our normal way of doing things. It makes sense that if meditation practice can truly bring us happiness, there is no reason for not applying it in our lives. Because after all, what matters most in life is true happiness and peace. If you achieve this, your life is meaningful and worth living. If you do not achieve this, it is

not meaningful. Even if you have acquired knowledge, it is of no benefit. However, if you find enough inner peace and happiness, the question of whether you are poor or rich, educated or not does not matter.

If the mind is too distracted by external matters, we feel restless and can't feel happy within. On the other hand, when we bring the mind inward, trying to let go of all these external thoughts, slowly we feel more peace and happiness. Without controlling and calming the mind, all our happiness is scattered and dispersed to the outside.

To give an example, when we have some unfulfilled desire with respect to some external object, it can be the cause of great suffering and problems. Having that object of desire in the mind can take away all our joy and happiness, and act as a cause of continuous problems and worry. When there is so much worry in the mind, it can affect our physical health, and even cause physical pain. On the other hand, if we enjoy inner peace and a relaxed mind, this can be a condition for enjoying better physical health.

Now we will begin the breathing meditation. Start by making yourself comfortable in a sitting posture, relaxing your body and trying to remove all distracting thoughts. Just try to let the mind rest within. Having brought the mind within, instead of now and again letting the mind be distracted by external objects, try to place the focus on incoming and outgoing breath. [Meditation silence here.]

Geshe Doga wonders if anyone has a question to ask, because he feels he is always talking to you, and maybe there is too much talking from his side!

Question (rephrased by Samdup): If self-cherishing is one of the root causes of all our problems, why is it not categorised as one of the root delusions?

Answer: First of all, delusion is a term with a specific meaning here. Delusion refers to mistaken or wrong states of consciousness. When you say 'self-cherishing mind', you don't usually consider whether it is a wrong or right state of consciousness, so it is not categorised as a delusion.

The self-cherishing attitude is not self-grasping, which is one of the delusions. It is not self-grasping because self-grasping 'holds' to a self that doesn't exist; whereas, self-cherishing views a self that relatively exists. The self-cherishing attitude holds on to this relatively existing self as something very special and superior to any other beings. [Further exchange with student here.]

Answer: I think your question is more a technical question of usage, of terminology. In the Buddhist study of the mind, there are six different categories of [root] delusion, as well as the different secondary mental factors. So when you talk of the self-cherishing attitude, it is not a secondary mental

factor, so therefore it cannot be categorised into any of the delusions.

Delusions are not only harmful to other beings, they are harmful to you. The self-cherishing mind is not necessarily harmful to you, but it is an obstacle to us being of benefit to other beings. Spiritual practitioners who belong to the Lesser Vehicles, like Hearers or Solitary Realisers, have a strong self-cherishing attitude. With that attitude, they don't think of benefiting others but strongly believe in seeking their own liberation. But, in order to achieve liberation, they have to overcome all the mental delusions. Has that made it a bit clearer? Next question!

What [Geshe Doga] is saying is that in the Buddhist study of mind, self-cherishing is not a delusion. But if your question is whether self-cherishing and self-grasping are different, Geshe Doga says he has explained it many times in the past, because he was not always sure that the message was getting across. So the confusion does arise – whether this may be related to your question – when we talk of the self-grasping and self-cherishing attitude, because in texts like the Lam Rim it presents the disadvantages of the self-grasping or self-cherishing attitude together. However, the reason the faults of these two are presented together is because the faults are the same.

Whether Arhats or Foe-Destroyers (of the Lesser Vehicles of Hearers and Solitary Realisers) have abandoned the self-cherishing attitude is a topic of dispute among scholars. Some say that they have abandoned it, but some others say they have not. In fact, we have also discussed this in the past. Any other questions?

Answer to question from student: When you say fear, are you referring to a particular type of fear? Can it be aggravated or made worse or more serious by the mind? Can you be more specific about fear? Geshe Doga says that sometimes anger is the opposite. When you experience strong anger, you don't feel fear. Rather, you feel that you've got more courage to take action, even if it is very aggressive and violent.

During the riots in Indonesia, even when the police were charging people with their weapons and guns, the people directly confronted them without any fear. Why? Because there was so much resentment, so much anger. We are not saying that whenever we experience anger, we feel courage. Of course, there are times when, as you say, we experience fear while at the same time feeling anger. The experience of anger is diverse, depending on the circumstances. It has to do with the intensity of the anger. When anger is very forceful, we don't worry about anything. But when anger is not strong, we might have more fear, and some space to be conscious of how we should respond.

While we may not be sure about anger, fear definitely arises because of the self-cherishing or self-centred mind. There's always a component of the self-centred mind whenever we experience fear. Usually, when we feel strong anger, our anger becomes suppressed when we are confronted by a threat to our own safety, which can counteract the anger. If a kid is having a tantrum and showing anger to a parent, and the parent goes and gets a stick or whatever just to frighten him or her, suddenly they'll calm down and will be prepared to accept whatever they are told. Usually, when we strongly feel some threat to our own interest and feel fear, under such circumstances, it seems we don't usually have much anger. Any other question?

Question: What is the antidote to fear if patience is the antidote to anger?

Answer: Courage! There is a way to train ourselves and learn how to be courageous. Martial arts! In the same way that you send kids to learn martial arts, whether they learn a lot or not, it does make some difference to their minds, to give them self-confidence. We also need some self-confidence and courage. One of the local Tibetan families sent their child to learn martial arts. The father told Geshe Doga that he was sending the child, and he was happy with that because the child seemed to have more confidence in himself in fighting with other kids [laughter]. Sometimes, they need that, otherwise they can be very timid and lose everything- if you give them a present the other kids could bully them for it.

If you are physically very fit and have learned some art of fighting, it is an advantage in finding certain jobs like security guard [laughter]. Geshe-la said one Tibetan who migrated to Australia got some sort of job to do with security in the airport – due to his physical fitness and knowledge of martial arts – when he had just arrived, not even confident with his English language, and with no other qualifications.

In Tibet, there are some people lacking any education, but who are physically well built and have a courageous mind, who get employed by high Ministers or leaders as their bodyguards, with all the privileges [laughter].

So sometimes it's good to give lessons on courage to children. Of course, the aim of the lesson is not to teach the kids to fight and defeat other kids, nor to encourage them to undertake harmful actions. Rather, it is to face things in positive ways for their personal development, so they feel more confident in what they do and what they achieve in life. Always push these ideas, courage and spirit, because not having these can be an obstacle to our personal development.

If you recall the teaching of Shantideva in *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, he used the analogy of two warriors – one that was brave, and one that was not so brave. When they met in the battlefield, the soldier that was brave would become braver if he saw a wound or blood on his own body, challenging his enemy. The one who was not brave would lose his courage just seeing blood on his enemy's body.

So we'll finish the teaching here tonight. As usual, we will chant the Buddha's mantra. Calming the mind inward, we focus on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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