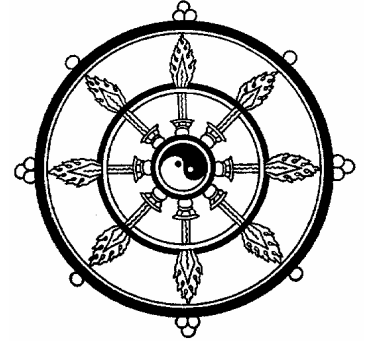

Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

འཕྲིན་ལྗོན་མཚོ་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



10 February 1999

First of all, Geshe Doga said he would like to welcome you to this year's program. He wishes you all 'Tashi delek' (which means 'best regards' in Tibetan) after the teaching break of the last six weeks. Geshe Doga said he is very pleased to meet you all, and to start these teachings.

Before we begin the teachings, there are some questions that we have to ask ourselves, such as 'Why are we gathered here together?' and 'What we are supposed to be doing here?', and 'What are we are trying to achieve by coming here?'

Asking such questions brings to mind the purpose that we constantly seek in our life. The reason why we are here is no different from the reasons for our daily actions, our work and all the different things that we do. Our aim is to always find happiness in our life, and that happiness is something we want urgently, in the near future, in this very lifetime.

Regardless of the actions that we pursue the aim is the same, and that is to seek happiness as quickly as possible. We can also notice that for most of us, the happiness that we seek is for our own benefit. That is the very reason why we come here together to try to learn about the Buddhist teachings. There is also the opportunity to discuss these teachings with [likeminded] friends. So it is very important to know whether the special step that we have taken in coming here is going to bring happiness.

In order to achieve happiness we need to think about the real causes of happiness. If we examine, then the main source of happiness is within ourselves. Of course, we have to make some effort to create the causes, and that effort also depends on ourselves. Therefore it is very important to first of all realise that finding the happiness that you seek in life depends mainly upon yourself. It is up to you, rather than any external conditions or factors.

When we realise this, then we have a stronger sense of feeling that the main responsibility for what we seek in life rests with ourselves. When you have this strong sense of [personal] responsibility then you have a stronger motivation to achieve your goal. With this, you have more tolerance for the hardships and obstacles you face. In short we are trying to realise that the main cause of happiness is something within ourselves. In essence, the main cause depends upon the qualities and the energy of your own mind.

When we begin to understand that our mind is the main

source of happiness in our life, and to think about the mind, then we are approaching the subject of the spiritual teachings. The spiritual teachings can open up our understanding of our mind, and of our own self. [This subject matter is] not [found] in any other class of teachings. Try to also understand how obvious it is that when your mind is at peace and satisfied, then automatically and naturally, you feel the same way. Even our physical health also improves when our mind is at peace. In contrast, if our mind is very disturbed, restless and in chaos, then all the effort we make, and all the conditions we find, fail to make us feel happy and peaceful.

It is not very easy to understand our mind, because it is something that is within us. These spiritual teachings are saying that within us there is the positive potential to cultivate a positive state of mind, and this positive state is the cause of peace and happiness within our mind. It is not enough for one to just hear that if we cultivate a positive state of mind, then this means that our mind is at peace and happy, and so therefore we are also happy. In fact, what we have to clearly recognise is the nature of the positive state of mind that is said to be the true source of happiness in life.

What we find when we study the spiritual teachings is that the practice which we call meditation is to calm our mind. The teachings tell us how to cultivate and maintain a wholesome and positive state of mind. They point out to us that, rather than thinking of outer conditions and things as being a reliable source of happiness and satisfaction, the true source of happiness and unfailing friend in life, is within ourselves. We practise meditation to try to recognise this inner friend, and inner source of happiness, and try to see this friend as our real protector and refuge in our search for lasting peace and happiness.

The spiritual teachings and meditation practice show us how, if our mind is not controlled, calmed, and tamed, then rather than making us happier and more peaceful everything we do in life is a waste. We can see from our own experience how, if we have not achieved some control over the mind, then we can be overpowered and influenced by thoughts and uncontrolled emotions. We can see that if we do not first deal with those uncontrolled and very disturbing feelings and emotions, and put them to rest, then all we shall find in life is unhappiness.

We learn in the teachings that of all the positive states of

mind, the supreme positive state of mind is loving kindness or compassion, and the bodhi mind, which is the altruistic mind of enlightenment, which has arisen from this love and compassion. This positive state of mind of love and compassion is the true source of lasting happiness, because if we cultivate it we free ourselves of all the trouble that we have in our relationships with our friends and enemies. If we think about it, we realise that the various forms of suffering that we undergo in life are all because of the very negative attitude of having strong desirous attachment to those people we call friends, whilst having strong anger or hatred towards others who we call enemies. With this attitude you find suffering in life, because you are caught in the conflict and confusion in your mind. If we have cultivated love and compassion for all beings, then there is no such conflict or problem. It says in the teachings that this mind of love and compassion is a universal very precious state of mind.

We have to understand the preciousness of this mind of love and compassion in the context of personal experience. When we talk of love and compassion, we are not talking about something, which we do not already possess within us. All we are saying is to try to recognise and understand the preciousness of that mind. This makes it very clear that our practice is to perfect and further develop this love and compassion, making it even more pure, and trying to extend it towards more beings. It is also important to realise whenever we do our spiritual practice we have to make sure that it is all done within the context of one's mind.

As said before, cultivating love and compassion can truly bring more peace and happiness to our own life, and to the lives of others. It can also prevent many unnecessary problems in our lives, because it transforms us into a better, more well-mannered person if we practise day-to-day, trying to focus on love and compassion. When we say love and compassion, we are referring to a sense of care, concern and thought for other beings. If we try to develop that further, this naturally improves our relationships with our friends. It can also bring more tolerance and understanding to your mind so that your mind is not easily hurt or disturbed by outer, unfavourable conditions, such as hearing bad words from friends or from outsiders.

We can see that when love and compassion is fully developed, this can sustain lasting peace and happiness in our mind. With this love and compassion in your mind is not disturbed even if you receive harm from enemies, strangers or friends. You can remain very peaceful and patient with others. Through making some progress in this practice of thought transformation, or mind training, there is the potential to make our life more stable and balanced. We can be very strong inwardly, and have a very broad understanding of events.

With this view we can make sure that changes in outer circumstance have the least effect on our life, specifically on the inner stability of our mind. We can remain mentally peaceful and satisfied even if the

conditions in life change. We have the potential to remain inwardly stable if, through training our mind, we develop such love and compassion.

In simple terms, our mind is so important because every action that we do comes from our mind. If we talk of keeping our body very healthy, this also depends upon changing our whole mental attitude towards our health. You can get skin cancer as a result of lying in the sun for a long time. If we trace back, the initial cause of this is our mind. We have the thought of desiring to change our skin colour, or attachment to bright sunlight, and so motivated by that mind we risk our health.

If we look at every changing situation in our life, it is all predetermined by our mind. If we see that there are good or bad things happening in our relationships, we can also trace the cause back to our mental attitude. Out of a very negative mental attitude, we create some very unskillful or negative actions, which can be the cause of upsetting our friends. Likewise, by cultivating a positive state of mind and putting that mind into action, we can please our friends. We are just emphasising here how by focusing on our own mind, and trying to make some change by correcting certain wrong attitudes, and by cultivating a positive right way of thinking, this can make a difference to our own life, and to the lives of those around us. So try to understand that the primary aim of both learning about the spiritual teachings, and engaging in meditation practice is the same - it is to train and transform our mind.

This has been an introductory teaching. We did not do the usual meditation at the beginning of the session. Some of you might even be thinking that all you are hearing about is the importance and benefits of meditation practice, yet we haven't done any meditation here. So we shall finish this session with a meditation. Begin by adopting the meditation posture, making sure it is very comfortable and relaxing. Then try to remove all distracting thoughts, and let the mind rest. After that we shall chant the Buddha's mantra. Try to use the chanting as the object on which to focus your mind.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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