

2008-03-09 Dharma of The Dhammapada

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SPEAKERS

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I think some of you have been many of you know, I translated an ancient Buddhist texts called the Dhammapada. And partly I translated it because I very fond of this text, this text which is 423 verses that many of them mostly go back to the Buddha. And some of them probably come from other sources. But in the centuries after the Buddha, there was a custom India of compiling verses and birth verse anthologies, and there are a variety of these diverse anthologies that existed at the time. And the one that comes down to us in our tradition is called the Dhammapada. And it's considered by many to be one of the great classics of religious literature. And there are something like 50 least English translations, so, I added to a crowded field And, and I translated it mostly for my own study for my own engagement. And in this in this text in this tradition, and I still even having translated, I still find very nice to go back and reread and reread. And sometimes I'm surprised what I read in here, even though I translated it. And I think of it as like mostly four line verses, and all the verses that have these wisdom teachings, and in wisdom teachings or teachings, which is useful to go back to over and over again. And it had kind of blossom in the mind, digested the mind, percolating the mind in various ways. It's kind of new understandings arise as they kind of sit there and go through. And so I wanted to try this this morning to give a presentation of talk on the Dharma of the demo kata. of the teachings of the Dhammapada by reading a series of verses from here. And one of the things I'll say, further further says introduction is that when I encounter a text like this, I think of the, the lineage of practitioners down through the centuries, that have brought the Buddhist teachings to me or to us, and that it's not just something that appeared out of nowhere, but there's a very rich kind of lineage very rich tradition, that is part of and the expression that I like for that lineage is a warm hand to warm hand. That somehow Buddhism is transmitted this teachings and practices from one person to another kind of living tradition, warm hand to warm hand. And you go back to these verses, and in my mind in my kind of imagination I imagined a little bit that it goes back to a tradition of monks and nuns, teachers, the Buddha, who sat a lot in the forest. And a time before there were cell phones and computers and electricity and the speed of audit are kind of life. And they sat in you know, I imagined these beautiful openings, Sunny openings in the forest, and then the underneath the shade of one three would be sitting, the Buddha or some person like him, and, and in that in that kind of very peaceful, natural setting, we would hear these kinds of teachings. And one of the verses in them uppada says, better than 1000 meaningful verses is one meaningful verse, which, having been heard, brings peace. So if I deal with you, just The right one for you read that one. And, but again here are pointing to the kind of the function of these versus the function of the vs is not only to bring some wisdom and, and to our lives and reflection to our lives, but also hopefully to bring some peace, which is one of the hallmarks of Buddhist practice, the aim is peace. And then this idea of being in the forest, there's a verse here, being part of it, the light for our forests. There, the passion free, the light. Light poles are the forest. They're the passion for the light, those are afraid of passion like lust, and good light in the forest. So one of the

interesting things about this text is that there's about 10% of the verses. So almost 40 of the verses focus on having Beans. And sometimes that's lost sight of, because there's all kinds of different teachings in here. And different Western translators have translated this text differently as well. And sometimes their philosophy, their worldview, it comes, comes through in the translation, it's not really doesn't really represent to the Buddha. And you find some of the translations are quite world negating in a way that I believe is not in the original at all. Having gone through the original texts and Pauline translated it. Though you could say, well, Gail, you probably your biases come through your translation. I tried very hard not to have my bias come through. But, you know, can't argue the fact that 10% or so of the verses are talking about happiness, they're happy versus one who drinks in the Dharma. When your drinks in the Dharma, and what you don't know because you don't know Paulie, is that the word for drink is picky. Pity also means joy. There's a wordplay here, the one who enjoys the Dharma, one who drinks the Dharma. When he drinks in the Dharma, sleeps happily with a clear mind. The sage always delights in the Dharma. Talk by the noble ones. Ah, so happily we live without hate among those with hate. So how can we live without misery among those in misery? So how can we be live without ambition among those with ambition? so happily, we live, we have no attachments, we shall feast on joy, as the radiant gods. So these are happy people. They're happy and so in a sense Happiness is a timeless issue. You know, even though this was maybe written 24 2400 2500 years ago, you know, happiness is still an issue. In fact, there are a whole industry now on books that happiness, variety of things have become quite popular. The study of it. And, you know, there's something like the Dhammapada is meaningful as a really religious classic. Because the teachings are kind of timeless, they're as relevant then as they are now. When we're happy verse, Rouse yourself, don't be negligent. Live the Dharma, a life of good conduct. When your lives the Dharma is happy in this world, and the next. So 10% of the verses have to do with happiness. Another big percentage of them I don't know I encounter many has to do with related states, and one of the most common ones is peace. Pieces kind of held up as being kind of a higher ideal value in this tradition. A monk filled with delight and pleased with the Buddhist teachings attains happiness, the stilling of formations, the state of peace. tasting the flavor of solitude and peace, when becomes free of distress and evil, drinking the flavor of Dharma joy. Peaceful embody peaceful in speech, the monastic peacefully and well concentrated who has rejected the world's date is called one at peace. Rejecting the world's bait, some people might see that as being world negating. What's this thing about data that will grow to a good place right well, there's no shortage of temptation out there. There's other things besides dates, but they you know, we bite, and then we hurt. Calm in mind, speech and action, and released through right understanding. Such a person is fully at peace. So happiness in peace. So this this text is that's kind of like the direction of aim that this text is trying to bring a person or directed person in order to do that. One of the things that becomes important to this tradition is that we understand our own mind, understand our mind. So there's a number of verses the whole chapter titled The mind and understand both the condition of the mind, the mind which is not at peace, the mind is suffers and also understand the capacity of the mind to discover peace and happiness to develop itself.

So this is a verse that I like because it's kind of evocative little bit are the mind hard to control, flighty, a liking where it wishes. When does well to tame the disciplined mind brings happiness a lighting word wishes, the mind has a mind of its own. Some of you when you sit down to meditate, we understand that boys pretty flighty, distracted the monkey mind. The mind hard to control fighting, alighting work wishes. One does well to tame the watched mind brings happiness, the watch mind cultivating mindfulness. There's another very powerful image of the monkey mind. Maybe like a fish out of water thrown on dry ground. The mind trashes about trying to escape Mars. Command, your mind everything like that. Here's one about kind of pursuing the spiritual life or the life of liberation in the wrong way. He talks about the different aesthetics of the time. pool. What use is matted here? What use is a deer skin and road. The tangled jungle is within you, and you groom the outside looking at the wrong place.

Whatever an enemy may do to an enemy, or haters, one to another. far worse is the harm from one's wrongly directed mind. That's a powerful statement. No matter what someone else might do to you. What do we do to ourselves? long lead record will be worse. Neither mother or father, or any other relative can do one as much good as one's own well directed mind. So we look outside for someone to help us and do things for us. But no one can do as much good for ourselves if we can do as much good for us as we can for ourselves with a well directed mind. And so this takes practice. So there's a whole series of these verses that focus on cultivating, developing oneself practicing. And the assumption in this tradition here in this text is that the human mind is malleable. We're not stuck with the mind that we were, you know, as it is right now. But it's possible to do religious practice, spiritual practice, and meditation practice and variety of things. And we can change and shape develop, cultivate the mind. As I said, cultivated mind is what's needed. bring peace. And I know plenty of people who think that maybe peace is found just by letting go letting go letting go by not doing it. There's some degree That's true. But the mind which hasn't been disciplined or has an inner strength is not going to be able to let go as quickly or as realistically as healthfully. So part of this is developing ourselves. So practice, here's the rationale for practice. If we're new oneself to be precious, when would guard oneself with care? The sage will watch over herself in any part of the night. Before knew oneself be precious. So again, the warm hand to warm hand tradition, a tradition that we're, we're valuable refreshers, there's something there's a treasure. There's something really beautiful in each person. And if we can see that beauty in ourselves, then we would want to protect that regard that watch over and develop it. Wisdom arises from spiritual practice, without practice, if the case always wide awake are the are the disciples of Gautama, the Buddha, whose minds constantly day and night, the light in practice. The next verses is very famous as quoted a lot in different kind of ways a different kind of variations of it. It is up to you to make strong effort. The Buddha's merely tell you how it's up to you to make strong effort. Teachers nearly kill you. Following the path, those absorbed in meditation

will be freed from Mara's bonds. And part of practice is part of this tradition is not just to do it alone, even though the focus is on one's own mind, cultivating oneself and safeguarding oneself. oneself it's not so not not an individualistic practice there is a way of practicing the community with others being supported. And in reading this, this kind of is these verses I'm aware that you know, we're supported by a lineage of generations generations of practitioners who brought us this bring us the teachings. But here's one like someone pointing to treasure, is the wise person who sees your faults and points them out. associate with such a sage. good will come of it not bad. If you associate with such as this. Good we'll come up with not bad if you still associate with one such as this. So, do a lot allow people in your life to see your faults to point them out. Are you open for observation for comments for I noticed something? Oh no. Like someone pointing to a treasure is the wise person who sees your faults and points them out. But then a little bit different than this. Do not consider the faults of others or what they have or haven't done. Consider rather what you yourself have or haven't done. So, don't In other words, if you're wise person, a teacher, maybe sometimes you can give people feedback, but don't go around looking at other people's faults. One of my favorite ones so rules with monks, is that they have a whole series of rules about how they're supposed to eat under the bowls and stick bowls. And they don't learn the rules is they're not allowed to look in the other monks bowls. To see how they're eating, they're following the rules or not.

All experience is preceded by mind led by mind made by mind, Speaker act with a corrupted mind. And suffering follows, as the wagon wheel follows the foot of the ox. All experiences preceded by mind led by mind made by mind, Speaker act with a peaceful mind and happiness follows like a never departing shadow. So this dichotomy or this, the fact that the mind precedes it all the mind is so central in this particular tradition and to emphasize how Central important to mind is in the introduction to the book guy, I compare it to the beginning of Genesis, the beginning of the Bible or the Torah, where there it's all

begins with God, as far as I could tell. And so that's the beginning. But in, in Buddhism, this, these two verses are just read. The first two verses of this text are probably among the verses that qualify, qualify as being the beginning of the Buddhist scriptures. And here, it's the mind, which is held up as being Central. And that because you get a very different understanding of spiritual life, if you start with the mind compared to if you start with God, or God. And so there's kind of interesting kind of contrast and differences between theistic religions and non theistic isn't that Buddhism is non theistic. I think of it as being a it's a Not theocentric. And so, to say it's atheistic is not quite accurate. To say theistic is not really accurate either, but it's not theocentric in the sense in a sense, you could say it's anthro centric, people centric. But that bothers some people to cope with that. So here, the mind takes precedence. And what you do has consequences. So if you speak and act with a corrupted mind, suffering will follow. And here's a very important equation, that there's something about suffering that arises in the result of how your mind has been. And then it goes on to say happiness arises from a peaceful mind. And, and the analogies here the images, the wagon wheel follows the hoof of the ox for suffering. To be correct for the corrupted mind and suffering follows as the wagon wheel follows to fulfill the ox Imagine an ox with a really heavy wagon of goods, pulling it straining, sweating. It's a big burden to pull this heavy wagon. So, speaker after the corrupted mind and sufferings, heavy suffering burden will follow you. But then imagine never departing shadow. You go along and have a shadow behind you. You're walking along, and the shadow doesn't weigh anything. And there is no burden to be you know, bring the shadow along with you. Speak react with a peaceful mind and happiness follows like a never departing shadow. So your happiness burden. Is there any like way?

Not by silence. Does an ignorant fool become a sage? This tradition is text has a lot of discussion about the wise person, the foolish person And kinda little bit seemed odd to me when I came across it seems kind of derogatory or negative to call someone a fool. And there's a whole chapter called the fool that whole chapter called the sage. And that, that, that way of looking at people's intuition, and it's when I reflect on it, I think it's very different than calling people saints or sinners. You know, because, you know, if you're fool and you can become wise, maybe. And in segments, one of the verses says, a fool that knows he's a fool. to that degree wise. Not by silence does an ignorant fool become a sage, the wise person, who as if holding a set of scales, selects what's good and avoid what's evil, is for that reason, a sage. So the ability to be discerning in a healthy way discriminating Different options, different choices we make, be able to see the differences and then be able to choose between those differences is part of the criteria part of the definition of a wise person in this tradition.

And then with practice comes insights, understandings, wisdom, and I want to give you a share a few of them that I like. Ancient is the same, ancient is the same, I like this one too Even before the Buddha there was wisdom teachings, and this warm hand to warm hand. You know, started before him he received it as well from others. Ancient is the same. It is it is not just today. They find fault in one sitting silently. They find fault in one speaking much. They find fault One speaking moderately. No one in this world is not found at fault. This might help you be more economists. That's for me well and no one can be found. Who has been is or will be only criticized or only praised. So what do you do then? How do you keep your peace and your calm your stability, when you're criticized and praised, it's built into this life that sooner or later will happen. And if you if you stay silent, and don't say anything at all, not by silence does an ignorant fool become a safe? That's a risky business. Open your mouth

is another kind of small wisdom thing. And I like the image of it. Not even with a shower of gold coins. So they didn't have the California Lottery back then. Not even with a California Lottery, not even with a shower of gold coins. Would we find satisfaction in essential craving. People threatened by fear. Go to many refuges to mountains, forests, parks, trees and shrines. None of these is a secure refuge. None is a supreme refuge. Not by going to such a refuge is one released from all suffering. Here again, people

are looking outside of themselves for safety. So here they're talking about going into nature. People go out in all kinds of places people go outside of themselves to be safe. But when someone going for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha sees with right insight Four Noble Truths, suffering, the arising of suffering, the overcoming of suffering, and the Eightfold Path, leading to the ending of suffering, then this is the secure refuge. This is the supreme refuge, by going to such a refuge, when is released from all suffering. This is a key insight of Buddhism, for happiness for peace, for liberation from suffering, is the insight into the Four Noble Truths. And then with practice and insight, then comes realization. And this text is not these ancient traditions, not about just an abstract ideas. These ideas are there because to help us be transformed, we change in some way. And we're talking about individual transformations change, growth, development, at the heart of this and with these ideals of happiness and peace as being kind of like the, you know, keeps me emphasizes that it's not a strange transcendence, you know, metaphysical or supernatural kind of idea. It's something that's kind of hopefully all of you have some sense some experience of some degree of happiness and peace. And here we're developing it to a great degree so it becomes a common part of our life. And we're like about these goals of happiness and peace is you become peaceful by being peaceful. You start you start living that way more and more. Anyway realization of this the second point, when it comes realized inside of us with us, let go so here are some new insights or experiences, realization. Let go of the past. Let go of the future and lead Go of the present. gone beyond becoming with a mind released in every way, you do not again undergo birth and old age released the mind from all things we cling to even the present moment, then we no longer going through cycles of self identity, self identification, becoming craving, wanting, building up, breaking down. For someone at the Journey's End, freed of sorrow, liberated and always released from all bonds, no fever exists as your temperature no fever exists. Whoever is unimposing among those who oppose peaceful among the violent not claiming Among those who claim I call a Brahman Buddha redefined Brahman was like the highest caste in ancient India. And the Buddha redefined caste in a sense by saying, you know you don't become a Brahmin, by birth, you become by your behavior and your inner heart and mind. Peaceful fearless, free of craving and without blemish. Having reached the goal and destroyed the arrows of becoming, one is in one's final body. fearless, free of craving and without blemish. Those who fully cultivate the factors of awakening, give up grasping, enjoy non clinging and having destroyed the toxins are luminous

and completely liberated in this life. I like this line. Enjoy Why no one claiming that okay with you was last time you enjoyed it. There is no happiness higher than peace. Nirvana is the foremost happiness. There is no happiness higher than peace. So peace has held up very high and Nirvana is the foremost happiness. So Nirvana and peace are considered synonymous. Among filled with delight, and pleased with the Buddhist teachings, attains happiness, the stilling of formations, the state of peace, if I'm permitted to rephrase it when you are filled with the light and pleased With the Buddhist teachings you will attain happiness, the stilling of formations, the state of peace so I hope that you get filled with the light and I don't know what it's like to listen to all these verses this morning. But I find it quite organized myself to kind of review and kind of be reminded of these periodic Lee and having them kind of, you know, one a day sometimes kind of drift through and inform my day and I clicked the link. In these teachings I typed like in the lineage I take delight in the tradition that's held them and supported them and made them part of our part of my life and

I take the life in whatever sense I have, of liberation of freedom. And one of the I couldn't I didn't find it easily. But there's a verse in here, a couple of places, I think where it talks about someone who's liberated, has nothing. And I just love that has nothing. So you have to take the light and the possibility of having nothing. And in doing that, may you be a warm hand that brings a warmth to the hands of others. I think that can be a big part of all this is not just for ourselves here, but also so we can continue passing on, not necessarily Buddhism, that's kind of incidental in some ways, but rather passing on the

happiness, the peace The possibility the warm, the warm and spreads from us goes out into the world.
And we all continue the warm hand to warm. Thank you very much