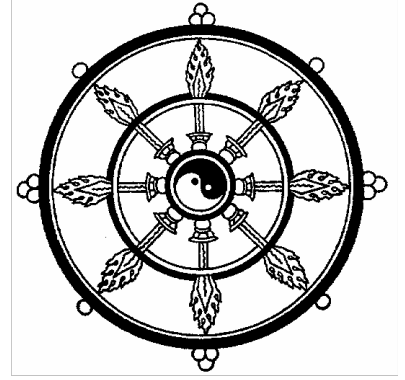

Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

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2 April 1997

As usual we will first do a breathing meditation together. Choose a comfortable sitting posture and make sure your body is at rest. Then rest the mind by letting go of all troubling thoughts, and find some inner peace. This is important when practising meditation. Stop the mind from wandering after distractions by bringing it inward, and direct all your mental attention to the breath. As you inhale and exhale, concentrate the mind on the movement of the breath coming in and going out. Don't lose this concentration to any other objects.

We are now going to continue our discussion on the text, *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*. We are up to the last two lines of Verse 9:

For even if loved ones should rise up against us
We must blame our self interest and feel it's our due.

Here the text gives instructions on dealing with the people you love and support who, instead of repaying your help, respond in a harmful or ill-mannered way. These people can be close relatives, close friends, your students, employees and so forth. There may have been times when you have been helpful, and shown love and kindness, but they respond ungratefully or even in a harmful way, such as speaking harshly or making accusations.

The instructions for dealing with such situations, which are taught here, are based upon the practice of the bodhisattvas. We have all faced such situations at some time in our lives. To put these instructions into practice, you will need an understanding of karma - the law of cause and effect.

In these situations, where someone close to you turns against you, it may make you wonder how it is possible for them to act in such a harmful way. These situations give you an opportunity to test the spiritual practice. If we follow the bodhisattva's way of thinking with a karmic view, then we see that we can't blame the cause of the situation on any outside factors. We have to see that this situation is the result of our own past actions. What is happening now is the result of a harmful attitude that we have projected towards others in the past. As it says in the text, we can blame the self-cherishing attitude that we hold in our minds; an attitude which may have caused us to harm another being in the past. The situation that we now face is the result of actions driven by that self-cherishing mind.

In such situations it is said that, rather than feeling

negative towards others or towards themselves, bodhisattvas will celebrate instead, thinking that this is truly what the self-cherishing mind deserves.

Practising like this helps us to view situations in different ways, to develop spiritual qualities like love and compassion, and to maintain our own individual peace. We should protect the peace we already have in our minds and not lose patience. This is because if we lose our self control when a friend harms us, then not only do we lose our own mental peace, stability and inner joy, but our spiritual development will also deteriorate.

Geshe Chekawa, the famous thought transformation master, said to meditate on compassion when harmed by a friend to whom you have done much good and shown much love.

Why do we feel worse when we receive harm from a friend than from an enemy? It is because we think that this behaviour, for example, harmful words, is inappropriate - even unnatural - from a friend. However, if we try to understand our friend's situation, this can help us to change our response. If your friend knows that you are a close friend, and is aware of all your support, and they still harm you, then this just shows the amount of suffering and unhappiness that your friend is going through. It is possible that the harm you receive is unavoidable, because your friend can't conceive of any other way of dealing with you. By focusing on the support that you have given them, and their response of giving you troubles and problems, then you can understand that this kind of response can only occur to a mind completely clouded with ignorance and mental dullness.

You can also learn that, whatever the situation, you are free to decide whether or not it will affect your life, your peace and stability. It is in your hands. You can, if you want to, remain inwardly calm and completely unaffected. Then, even when confronted with an adverse situation, you haven't allowed it to disturb your mental peace and affect your good nature.

We can all think of instances where these conflicts occur between father and son, mother and daughter or between relatives. There are so many situations where relatives or close friends have great expectations of receiving help, or some hope of receiving love or close feelings, but in the end, in spite of the sacrifices you've made for them, they turn against you and completely disappoint you. These are the situations in which it is so

important to remember the instructions and to put them into practice. Another famous Geshe, Langri Tangpa, went as far as to say that we should try to see these people - those who turn against us instead of repaying our kindness - as our spiritual teachers.

Whatever advice or instructions we take, we can all see the benefits of not losing our own mental peace as a consequence of the situations that occur in our lives. It is important that we try to learn as much as possible so that our daily mental outlook and mood is not always determined by the ongoing changes that we encounter.

If we view them realistically and with true understanding, we can even make unfavourable situations favourable for ourselves, by taking the opportunity to practice compassion and patience within our minds. For example, a mother visiting a mentally ill son in hospital receives violent harm from her own beloved son. Her response would be more one of feeling sorry for her child rather than anger. She would be more concerned about the mental disorder of her child, wishing for him to be cured of the disease. She feels no anger or hatred towards her child, as she clearly sees that he has no self control and that all his actions are driven by his insane mind. Instead, she feels sympathy and compassion for her child.

Similarly, we should understand that the harmful aggression a friend shows us comes from his or her own deluded mind. When the mind is clear we will not perform harmful actions such as harsh speech or abusive language. When we have a disturbed mind under the influence of delusions such as anger and ignorance, we then engage in very unskillful actions. As the famous Indian master Chandrakirti said, whether the harm you receive comes from a friend or an enemy, this harm is not their fault but the fault of their deluded mind.

Nobody wants anger in their lives. We are the only ones who are harmed when we give way to anger, because the anger we generate destroys our own inner peace and happiness. We have to counteract this anger and find a remedy within ourselves. Through a clear understanding of the cause of anger, and the cause of the harm we receive from others, we realise that it's not right to respond with anger, because their harmful actions are not their fault. The harm they inflict is not done with a clear mind, but, because they are overpowered by mental delusions, out of a lack of self control. Just as the mother shows concern for a beloved child that harms her, we too should show compassion towards others who harm us.

So these situations can be a cause for our spiritual development. For this reason, the person who harms us has done us a great favour. That is why some great early masters, such as Shantideva, say that these harmful people are worthy of showing even physical respect, with the hands folded in a gesture of prayer.

If we put these instructions into practise then we can at least stop any minor harm that we may receive from others, and not be automatically disposed to feeling angry or hateful towards them.

We will finish the teaching there and recite the Buddha's

mantra seven times. So, as before, sit in a relaxing meditation posture, remove all disturbing thoughts and just focus the mind on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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