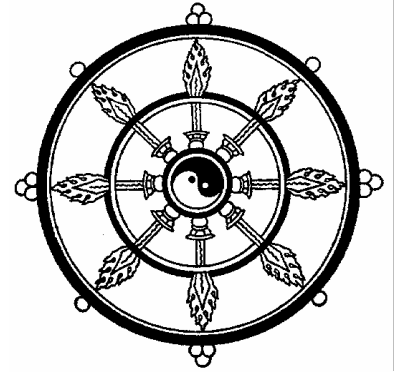


Dharmarakshita's "The Wheel of Sharp Weapons"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

ཨོ ལྷོ་སྤྱོད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



25 November 1998

First of all, we will do some breathing meditation, as usual. Choose a meditation posture – most importantly, one that is very comfortable and in which your body is fully relaxed.

After sitting in a relaxed posture, we should try to get rid of all distracting thoughts, and try to bring the mind fully inward. Then we should direct the mind to the incoming and outgoing breath, making sure it is fully focused on the breath with no other distractions.

We are going to continue the teachings from the mind-training text called *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*. Verse 48 reads:

When the troubles and the worries of family life
grieve us,
This is the same as the case of a child,
Who is cared for with love, later killing his parents.
Our suffering is the wheel of sharp weapons
returning
Full circle upon us for wrongs we have done.
Hereafter it is fitting in all of our lifetimes
For us to live purely as monks or as nuns.

This verse touches on the kinds of problems that exist in family life. It shows that, unless we have a positive mental attitude, these problems can cause us great stress, suffering and misery. When we say 'family life', what does it mean? Generally, it starts when you choose a life partner to be your husband or wife and, with that partner, you make your own place to live, which you call your home. Then you may have children. This verse is saying that, when you choose such a family life, you will face some problems.

Of course, it is not necessarily saying that we would be free of problems if we chose to live a celibate life as a monk or nun. You may find more happiness, less trouble and fewer problems by living a celibate life according to your vows, practice and spiritual commitments. However, you would still be faced with some of the same sorts of problems that exist in family life.

What kinds of problems do we face in choosing to live a family life? Initially, we might have the problem of finding the right person or partner with whom to start a family. When one hasn't found such a person, we have to put up with the problems involved in trying to find one.

After having found someone to live with as a wife or husband or whatever, you have to face the problem of having some conflict of interest in the relationship. Not getting along with the person you live with can be a

serious problem, and you may need to be able to guide yourself, from your own side.

The example mentioned here of a severe problem in family life is that you might give all your love, kindness, support, and care to your children. You might do everything to help and benefit them but, in the end, instead of showing gratitude towards you for what you have done, the children may show hatred towards you, such hatred that they may even want to kill you.

Under such miserable circumstances, we would need to turn to someone to help us through the problem. The most effective help we can get in reducing suffering caused by unavoidable, adverse circumstances is cultivating a right way of thinking. The right way of thinking is one that has a true understanding of the conditions that we face.

We have to understand that this thing did not just happen through external causes alone. There are also internal causes – one's own past actions, not only from this lifetime, but from many past lifetimes. Someone's children may hate them and give them harm, even though this parent has supported them, shown great love and benefited them. This indicates that in a past life, the parent has also shown hatred, even to those who had helped, supported, loved and shown kindness to them. Instead of repaying that kindness, out of their own self-centred mind, they instead caused harm.

Also, try to understand that the reason you receive harm from others, even from your own children is because the minds of your children, and of other people who harm you, are influenced by delusions. When the mind is influenced by delusions, for instance anger, we forget about the good things that other people have done for us. Rather, out of anger, we generate suspicious thoughts through which our hatred grows even more, until we undertake some harmful or violent action towards others.

As instructed here, whenever we face some problem, if we think about it the way we have discussed, we won't get too upset. This allows us to practise patience, and even to show love towards any other person who is causing harm to us. If we understand the causes of our problems from the point of view of the cause and effect of our actions, of our own karma, this motivates us to undertake the spiritual practice of not showing harm to someone who is causing harm to us, and to be more tolerant of them. Specifically, the practice that we are instructed here to undertake is the Lam Rim meditation

of giving and taking.

As part of the meditation of giving and taking, when you receive harm from someone who you regard as special, like your partner or children, you understand that all the harm done to you by others is the result of past actions committed from a self-cherishing attitude. Generally, whenever we carry out actions that please other people, they like us, but if our actions displease them, they respond with anger or hatred. If we consider our own response, when someone does what we consider to be something good for us, we feel happy with that person. But if they do something against our interests, we become unhappy with that person, and when we become unhappy with them, we begin to hate them. Out of hatred, we then harm that person.

Sometimes, when we have committed a serious wrongdoing, we excuse ourselves by saying we could not help it: 'I lost my temper, I could not control myself, I had so much hatred'. But other people, also, have no control when their minds are overpowered by such afflictive emotions as anger or hatred. Shantideva has said, in the Bodhisattvacharyavattara, that when someone's mind is overpowered by mental delusions, the tremendous force of those delusions may not only bring harm to other beings, it may also cause that person to harm him or herself, even causing them to end their own lives.

We may receive harm, in the form of abusive words or an angry expression, from people we regard as our closest friends, like our parents or children. If we understand the true situation of another, especially when someone shows anger towards us and harms us, we should regard them as being in need of our help and compassion. It is said by the great Bodhisattva, Togme, that we must cherish the one who harms us as our beloved child, in the same way that a mother would show more love, care and concern towards her child when the child is sick or infected with disease.

When a child causes a parent harm, we should think about everything the parents have done for that child throughout its upbringing. At every stage, they taught their children everything and supported them. So if a child begins to harm his or her parents, they must be totally overwhelmed by mental delusions, and cannot remember any of the good things that their parents have done for them. They forget everything – the only thing in their minds is hatred caused by having received some wrong that has upset them.

If you understand why your children can cause harm to you in this way, then you can extend that understanding to someone else you consider to be a very special person and who causes you harm. You can at least think that, just because you are receiving harm now, it doesn't necessarily mean that this person has totally forgotten about your friendship and all the good things you have done. If we use ourselves as an example, although we may feel love towards someone, in certain circumstances when we get extremely angry, we suddenly see that close person as an enemy because of the influence of anger on our minds.

We have to practise patience, to show love to our enemies. Here, the word 'enemy' doesn't necessarily mean someone you regard as your enemy – it could be your friend who, in certain circumstances when your mind has hatred, appears to you as an enemy. You may at other times possess strong attachment to that person, when they appear to you as very special, someone you want to hug. In the moment when you have hatred, your friend is the perfect object on which to practise and develop patience, just as in other circumstances he or she is an object that increases your desire.

Delusions are the main source of all the negative or harmful actions we do to others, and are also unpleasant to experience. If we understand the delusions within the minds of other people, we can see that when they cause us harm or show us anger their situation is not pleasant. This way of looking at the situation can help us to not retaliate.

There is a positive way of thinking about someone who causes you harm, not just thinking of the harm that they are giving you, but also thinking that they are giving you the opportunity to develop true compassion, patience and tolerance. Generally, we regard the practice of patience or compassion as positive, so instead of thinking about the harm this person causes you, try to think that they are benefiting you. So by following the teachings of mind training, such circumstances can be a cause of enhancing the quality of patience within you.

In this verse, it is also instructed that in order to prevent experiencing these types of problems that crop up in family life, choose a celibate life and observe all the commitments of a celibate.

We will finish by chanting the Buddha's mantra seven times, again making sure that in chanting the mantra, we sit in the meditation posture, fully relaxing ourselves and trying to place our focus on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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