

# THE WHEEL OF SHARP WEAPONS

*“Theg-pa chen-po'i blo-sbyong mtshon-cha 'khor-lo”*

by Dharmarakshita



Translated by Alexander Berzin and Sharpa Tulku, together with Jonathan Landaw and Khamlung Tulku, based on an oral explanation by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey



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The name of this work is *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons Effectively Striking the Heart of the Foe*.

I pay heartfelt homage to you, Yamantaka;  
your wrath is opposed to the Great Lord of Death.[1]  
*[notes by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey: see below]*

(1) In jungles of poisonous plants strut the peacocks, though medicine gardens of beauty lie near. The masses of peacocks don't find gardens pleasant, but thrive on the essence of poisonous plants.

(2) In similar fashion, [2] the brave bodhisattvas remain in the jungle of worldly concern. No matter how joyful this world's pleasure gardens, these brave ones are never attracted to pleasures, but thrive in the jungle of suffering and pain.

(3) We spend our whole lives in the search for enjoyment, yet tremble with fear at the mere thought of pain; thus since we are cowards, we are miserable still. But the brave bodhisattvas accept suffering gladly and gain from their courage a true lasting joy.

(4) Now, [3] desire is the jungle of poisonous plants here. [4] only brave ones, like peacocks, can thrive on such fare. If cowardly beings, like crows, were to try it, because they are greedy, they might lose their lives. [5]

(5) How can someone who cherishes self more than others take lust and such dangerous poisons for food? If he tried like a crow to use other delusions, [6] he would probably forfeit his chance for release.

(6) And thus bodhisattvas are likened to peacocks: they live on delusions – those poisonous plants. Transforming them into the essence of practice, they thrive in the jungle of everyday life. Whatever is presented, they always accept, while destroying the poison of clinging desire.

(7) Uncontrollable wandering through rounds of existence is caused by our grasping at egos as real. This ignorant attitude heralds the demon of selfish concern for our welfare alone: we seek some security for our own egos; we want only pleasure and shun any pain. But now, we must banish all selfish compulsion and gladly take hardship for all others' sake.

(8) All of our sufferings derive from our habits of selfish delusions we heed and act out. As all of us share in this tragic misfortune, which stems from our narrow and self-centered ways, we must take all our sufferings and the miseries of others and smother our wishes of selfish concern.

(9) Should the impulse arise now to seek our own pleasure, we must turn it aside to please others instead; for even if loved ones should rise up against us, we must blame our self-interest and feel it's our due.

(10) When our bodies are aching and racked with great torment of dreadful diseases we cannot endure, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we have injured the bodies of others; hereafter let's take on what sickness is theirs.

(11) Depressed and forlorn, when we feel mental anguish, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we have deeply disturbed minds of others; hereafter let's take on this suffering ourselves.

(12) When hunger or violent thirst overwhelms us, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we have kept what we had without sharing; we have plundered and stolen and lured people on. Hereafter let's take from them hunger and thirst.

(13) When we lack any freedom, but must obey others, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we have looked down on those who were lowly and used them as servants for our own selfish needs; hereafter let's offer our service to others with humble devotion of body and life.

(14) When we hear only language that is foul and abusive, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we have said many things without thinking; we have slandered and caused many friendships to end. Hereafter let's censure all thoughtless remarks.

(15) When we are born in oppressive and wretched conditions, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we have always had negative outlooks; we have criticized others, seeing only their flaws. Hereafter let's cultivate positive feelings and view our surroundings as stainless and pure.

(16) When we are parted from friends and from those who can help us, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we have taken the friends and good servants of others away, wanting them for ourselves; hereafter let's never cause close friends to part.

(17) When supreme holy gurus find us displeasing, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we have turned from the gurus and teachings, preferring the counsel of misleading friends; hereafter let's end our dependent relations with those who would turn us away from the path.

(18) When unjustly we are blamed for the misdeeds of others, and are falsely accused of flaws that we lack, and are always the object of verbal abuse, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we've despised and belittled our gurus; hereafter let's never accuse others falsely, but give them full credit for virtues they have.

(19) When the things we require for daily consumption and use, fall apart or are wasted or spoilt, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we've been careless with others' possessions; hereafter let's give them whatever they need.

(20) When our minds are unclear and our hearts are unhappy, we are bored doing virtue but excited by vice, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we've led others to acts of non-virtue; hereafter let's never provide the conditions that rouse them to follow their negative traits.

(21) When our minds are disturbed and we feel great frustration that things never happen the way that we wish, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we have caused interfering disturbance when others were focused on virtuous acts; hereafter let's stop causing such interruption.

(22) When nothing we do ever pleases our gurus, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now with our gurus we have feigned pious manners, but out of their presence have reverted to sin. Hereafter let's try to be less hypocritical and take all the teachings sincerely to heart.

(23) When others find fault with whatever we're doing and people seem eager to blame only us, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we've been shameless, not caring about others, we have thought that our deeds didn't matter at all, hereafter let's stop our offensive behavior.



(24) When our servants and friends are annoyed by our habits, and after a while cannot stay in our homes, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we've imposed our bad habits on others; hereafter let's change and show only kind ways.

(25) When all who are close turn against us as enemies, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we've held grudges inside us with anger with thoughts of sly methods to cause others pain; hereafter let's try to have less affectation, nor pretend to be kind while we harbor base aims.

(26) When we suffer from sickness and such interference, especially when gout has swollen our legs, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now without shame and with no self-control we have stolen or misused what others have given; hereafter let's never take anything offered to the Three Jewels of Refuge [7] as if it were ours.

(27) When strokes and diseases strike without warning, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we have broken our vowed words of honor; [8] hereafter, let's shun such non-virtuous deeds.

(28) When our mind becomes clouded whenever we study, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we have thought that the study of Dharma lacked prime importance and could be ignored; hereafter let's build up the habits of wisdom to listen and think about what Buddha taught.

(29) When sleep overwhelms us while practicing virtue, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we have gathered the causes for obstacles hindering our practice of virtuous acts. (*We have lacked all respect for the scriptural teachings; we have sat on our books and left texts on the ground. We have also looked down upon those with deep insight.*) Hereafter for the sake of our practice of Dharma let's gladly endure all the hardships we meet.

(30) When our mind wanders greatly and runs towards delusion, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we have neglected to meditate fully on defects pervading this transient world; hereafter let's work to renounce this existence (*and see the impermanent nature of things*).

(31) When all our affairs, both religious and worldly, run into trouble and fall into ruin, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we have felt cause and effect [9] could be slighted; hereafter let's practice with patience and strength.

(32) When rites we perform never seem to be fruitful, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we have relied on the gods of this world or on unskillful actions to bring us relief; hereafter let's turn in another direction and leave our non-virtuous actions behind.

(33) When none of the wishes we make reach fulfillment, although we've made prayers to the Three Precious Gems, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we have had an imperfect commitment to Buddha whose teachings deserve complete trust; hereafter let's place our exclusive reliance on Buddha, his teachings and those in his fold.

(34) When prejudice, polio or strokes have us crippled and external forces or harm rise against us, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we have collected vast stores of non-virtue by breaking our vows and offending protectors in our practice from guru-devotion to tantra; [10] hereafter let's banish all prejudiced views.

(35) When we lack all control over where we must travel and always must wander like waifs with no home, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we've disturbed holy gurus and others and forced them to move from their homes or their seats; hereafter let's never cause others disturbance by evicting them cruelly from where they reside.

(36) When the crops in our fields are continually plagued by drought, floods and hailstones, insects and frost, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we have failed to honor our pledges; hereafter let's keep all our moral vows pure.

(37) When we're poor, yet are filled with much greed and desire, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we've been misers, reluctant to share. The offerings we've made to the Three Jewels were meager; hereafter let's give with a generous heart.

(38) When our bodies are ugly and others torment us by mocking our flaws, never showing respect, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we've made images [III] lacking in beauty, by venting our anger, we've made ugly scenes; hereafter let's print books and make pleasing statues, and not be short-tempered, but be of good cheer.

(39) When attachment and anger disturb and upset us no matter how much we may try to suppress them, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we've held on to the improper outlook, stubbornly cherishing only ourselves; hereafter let's uproot self-interest completely.

(40) When success in our practices always eludes us, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now, deep within, we have clung to our ego, fully immersed in self-cherishing ways; hereafter let's dedicate all of the virtuous actions we do, so that others may thrive.

(41) When our mind is untamed though we act with great virtue, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we have engaged in those worldly ambitions that aim at success for ourselves in this life; hereafter let's work with pure one-pointed effort to nourish the wish to gain freedom's far shore.

(42) When after we do any virtuous action we feel deep regret or we doubt its effect, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we've been fickle and, stirred by base motives, have courted just those who have power or wealth; hereafter let's act with complete self-awareness, exerting great care in the way we make friends.

(43) When those with ambition repay trusting friendship by luring us on with their devious schemes, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now from ambition we have acted with arrogance, hereafter let's dampen our self-centered pride.

(44) When the force of attraction or that of repulsion colors whatever we hear or we say, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we've ignored what has caused all our troubles: the mass of delusion that dwells in our heart; hereafter let's try to abandon all hindrances: note their arising, examine them well.

(45) When no matter how well-meant our actions toward others, they always elicit a hostile response, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we've repaid loving-kindness with malice; hereafter let's always accept others' favors both graciously and with most humble respect.

(46) In short then, whenever unfortunate sufferings we haven't desired crash upon us like thunder, this is the same as the smith who had taken his life with a sword he had fashioned himself. Our suffering's the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. [12] Hereafter let's always have care and awareness never to act in non-virtuous ways.

(47) All of the sufferings that we have endured in the lives we have led in the three lower states, [13] as well as our pains of the present and future, are the same as the case of the forger of arrows who later was killed by an arrow he'd made. Our suffering's the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Hereafter let's always have care and awareness never to act in nonvirtuous ways.

(48) When the troubles and worries of family life grieve us, this is the same as the case of a child, who was cared for with love, later killing his parents. Our suffering's the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Hereafter it's fitting in all of our lifetimes for us to live purely as monks or as nuns.

(49) As it's true what I've said about self-centered interest, I recognize clearly my enemy now. I recognize clearly the bandit who plunders, the liar who lures by pretending he's part of me; oh what relief that I've conquered this doubt!

(50) And so Yamantaka, spin round with great power the wheel of sharp weapons of good actions now. Three times turn it round, [14] in your wrathful-like aspect your legs set apart for the two grades of truth, with your eyes blazing open for wisdom and means.

(51) Baring your fangs of the four great opponents, [15] devour the foe – our cruel selfish concern! With your powerful mantra [16] of cherishing others, demolish this enemy lurking within!

(52) Frantically running through life's tangled jungle, we are chased by sharp weapons of wrongs we have done returning upon us; we are out of control. This sly, deadly villain – the selfishness in us, deceiving ourselves and all others as well capture him, capture him, fierce Yamantaka, summon this enemy, bring him forth now!

(53) Batter him, batter him, rip out the heart of our grasping for ego, our love for ourselves! Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern! Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release!



(54) Hum! Hum! Show all your powers, O mighty protector. Dza! Dza! Tie up this enemy; do not let him loose. P'at! P'at! [17] Set us free by your might, O great Lord over Death. Cut! Cut! Break the knot of self-interest that binds us inside.

(55) Appear Yamantaka, O wrathful protector; I have further entreaties to make of you still. This sack of five poisons, [18] mistakes and delusion drags us down in the quicksand of life's daily toil. Cut it off, cut it off, rip it to shreds!

(56) We are drawn to the sufferings of miserable rebirths, yet mindless of pain, we go after its cause. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(57) We have high expectations of speedy attainments, yet do not wish to work at the practice involved. We have many fine projects we plan to accomplish, yet none of them ever are done in the end. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(58) Our wish to be happy is strong at all times, yet we don't gather merit to yield this result. We have little endurance for hardship and suffering, yet ruthlessly push for the things we desire. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(59) With comparative ease, we develop new friendships, yet since we are callous, not one of them lasts. We are filled with desire for food and fine clothing, yet failing to earn them, we steal and we scheme. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(60) We are experts at flattering others for favors, yet always complaining, we are sad and depressed. The money we have gathered we cannot bear to part with; like misers we hoard it and feel we are poor. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(61) We have done very little to benefit someone, yet always remind him how much we have done. We have never accomplished a thing in our lifetime, yet, boasting and bragging, we are filled with conceit. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(62) We have many great masters and teachers to guide us, yet, shirking our duty, ignore what they teach. We have many disciples, yet don't ever help them; we cannot be bothered to give them advice. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher Who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(63) We promise to do many glorious deeds, yet in practice we give others minimal help. Our spiritual fame has been spread far and wide, yet inwardly all of our thoughts are repulsive not only to gods, but to demons and ghosts. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(64) We have read very little, heard only a few teachings, yet talk with authority expertly on voidness. Our knowledge of scriptures is pitifully lacking, yet glibly we make up and say what we like. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(65) We have many attendants and people around us, yet no one obeys us nor heeds what we say. We feel we have friends in positions of power, yet should we need help, we are left on our own. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(66) We have gained lofty status and ranks of prestige. Yet our knowledge is poorer than that of a ghost. We are considered great gurus, yet even the demons don't harbor such hatred or clinging desire or as closed-minded an outlook as we seem to have. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(67) We talk about theories and the most advanced teachings, yet our everyday conduct is worse than a dog's. We are learned, intelligent, versed in great knowledge, yet cast to the wind wisdom's ethical base. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(68) We have selfish desires and horrible anger, which fester inside us, we would never admit; yet without provocation we criticize others and self-righteously charge them with faults we possess. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(69) We wear robes of saffron, yet seek our protection and refuge in spirits and gods of this world. We have promised to keep solemn vows of strict morals, yet our actions accord with the demons' foul ways. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(70) Our pleasure and happiness come from the Buddhas, the gurus, the teachings, and those who live by them, yet still we make offerings to ghosts and the spirits. All of our guidance derives from the teachings, and yet we deceive those who give this advice. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(71) We seek to have homes in monastic seclusion, yet, drawn by distractions, we venture to town. Discourses we hear teach us most noble practice, yet we spend all our time telling fortunes with dice. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(72) We give up monks' vows, the true path to gain freedom; we would rather be married, have children and homes. We cast to the wind this rare chance to be happy, and pursue further suffering, more problems and woes. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(73) Discarding our practice to reach liberation, we drift about searching for pleasure or trade. We've obtained human bodies with precious endowments, yet use them to gain only hellish rebirths. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(74) Ignoring effects that the teachings can bring us, we travel on business for profit and gain. Leaving behind all our gurus' wise lectures, we tour different places in search of some fun. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(75) We hoard what we have, never willing to use it, and leech all our food and our clothing from friends. We leave aside wealth from our father's inheritance, taking from others as much as we can. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(76) It's amazing how little endurance we have to do meditation, and yet we pretend to have gained special powers so others are fooled. We never catch up with the paths of deep wisdom, yet run here and there in needless great haste. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(77) Someone gives us advice from the depths of his heart, which is for our own good, but is harsh to our ears, and with anger we view him as if he's our foe. Yet when someone without any true feelings for us deceitfully tells us what we like to hear, with no taste or discernment we're kind in return. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(78) When others consider us close and dear friends and relate in strict confidence all they know, we disclose their deep secrets especially to their foes. When we have a good friend who is constantly with us, we locate his weak points so we can torment him. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.



(79) Our jealousy is strong and whatever is said we are always the skeptic, we doubt what is meant. We are fussy, bad-tempered and hard to get on with, inflicting obnoxious behavior on others. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(80) When someone requests us to do something for him, we are never obliging, but think up instead clever devious methods to do him some harm. When others concede and agree with our viewpoint, we do not acquiesce – we argue still more. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(81) We don't pay attention to what others tell us; we're a trial to be with; we strain others' nerves. Our feelings are hurt at the slightest remark, and we hold grudges strongly – we never forgive. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(82) We always are jealous of those of great status; we feel holy gurus are threats to avoid. Overwhelmed by attachment and ruled by our passions, we spend all our time lusting after young loves. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(83) We don't think of friendships as long-term commitments, we treat old companions with thoughtless neglect. And when we are making new friends with a stranger, we try to impress him in grandiose ways. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(84) We lack clairvoyance, yet lie, feigning powers, and then when proved wrong, we must bear all complaints. We have little compassion for those who are near us; whenever they blunder, we are quick to lash out. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(85) We have poor education and limited knowledge; whenever we speak we're unsure of ourselves. Our learning in scriptural texts is so meager, when hearing new teachings we doubt they are true. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(86) By making a habit of anger and passion, we come to despise everyone that we meet; and by making a habit of jealous resentment, we ascribe fruits to others, disclaiming their worth. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(87) We don't follow proper procedures of study; we say it is needless to read the vast texts. We feel there's no value in learning from gurus; we slight oral teachings and think we know best. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(88) We fail to explain what the Three Baskets [19] teach, but instead dwell on theories we've made up ourselves. We lack deep conviction and faith in the teachings, whatever we say leaves disciples confused. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(89) We do not despise actions unwise and immoral, instead we dispute and attempt to pick flaws in the excellent teachings and great masters' works. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(90) We are never embarrassed when acting disgracefully, only respectable deeds cause us shame. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(91) All the things we should do, we don't do even once, for improper behavior takes up all our time. Trample him, trample him, dance on the head of this treacherous concept of selfish concern. Tear out the heart of this self-centered butcher who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

(92) O mighty destroyer of selfishness-demons. With body of wisdom unchained from all bonds, Yamantaka, come brandish your skull-headed bludgeon of egoless wisdom of voidness and bliss. Without any misgivings, now wield your fierce weapon and wrathfully swing it three times [20] round your head.

(93) With all of your fierceness, come smash this foul enemy! Burst ego-concepts with your wisdom's great might! With your boundless compassion, protect us from suffering the miseries caused by our self-centered actions; destroy our self-cherishing once and for all!

(94) With all of the sufferings that others experience, smother completely our selfish concern. The sufferings of others arise from five poisons; thus whichever delusion afflicts other beings take it to smother delusions of self.

(95) Though we have not a doubt, for we recognize fully the cause and the root of mistakes we all make, if there is still left a part of our minds that would tend to support this delusion of self that we have, then destroy the firm hold of this part of our minds that, against our true wishes, makes fools of us still.

(96) As all that is wrong can be traced to one source our concern for ourselves whom we cherish the most, we must meditate now on the kindness of others. Accepting the suffering that they never wished for, we must dedicate fully our virtues to all.

(97) Thus accepting ourselves all deluded nonvirtuous actions that others have done in the past, in the present and future with mind, speech and body, may delusions of others as well as our own be the favored conditions to gain our enlightenment, just as the peacocks eat poison and thrive.

(98) As crows may be cured after swallowing poison by a powerful antidote given in time, let's direct to all others our virtuous merit, that this may replenish their chances for freedom. May all sentient beings reach Buddhahood soon!

(99) Till the time when all motherly beings and I gain the perfect conditions for us to be Buddhas, though the force of our actions may cause us to wander through various realms in the six rebirth states, may we always be able to help one another to keep our aim fixed on enlightenment's shore.

(100) Then for even the sake of but one sentient being may we gladly take birth in the three lower states. With enlightening conduct that never grows weak may we lead all the beings in miserable rebirths out of their sufferings and causes for pain.

(101) As soon as we've placed ourselves into their realm may the guards of the hells come to see us as gurus. May the weapons of torture they hold turn to flowers; may all harm be stilled, peace and happiness grow.

(102) Then may even hell beings develop clairvoyance and take higher rebirths as men or as gods. By developing strongly the wish to be Buddhas, may they pay back our kindness through heeding the teachings and regard us as gurus with confident trust.

(103) Then may all sentient beings of the three higher rebirths perfect meditation on egolessness. In this way, may they realize the non-self-existence of worldly involvement and freedom as well. May they place concentration on both of these equally, seeing their natures as equally void.

(104) If we practice these methods, we shall soon overcome our true enemies: selfish concern and self-love. If we practice these methods, we shall overcome also false concepts of ego we hold to be real. Thus by joint meditation on egolessness and on nondual wisdom of voidness and bliss, how can anyone not gain the causes to win a Buddha's physical body and its fruit, Buddhahood?

(105) O mind, understand that the topics discussed here are interdependent phenomena all; for things must rely on dependent arising to have an existence: they cannot stand alone. The process of change is alluring like magic, for physical form is but mental appearance, as a torch whirling round seems a circle of flame.

(106) There is nothing substantial to anyone's life-force: it crumbles apart like a water-soaked log; and there is nothing substantial to anyone's life span: it bursts in an instant like bubbles of foam. All the things of this world are but fog-like appearance: when closely examined, they fade out of sight. Like mirages these things at a distance seem lovely, but when we come closer, they are not to be found.



(107) All things are like images found in a mirror, and yet we imagine they are real, very real; all things are like mist or like clouds on a mountain, and yet we imagine they are stable and firm. Our foe: our insistence on ego-identities truly our own, which we wish were secure, and our butcher: the selfish concern for ourselves – like all things these appear to be truly existent, though they never have been truly existent at all.

(108) Although they appear to be concrete and real, they have never been real, anytime, anywhere. They're not things we should burden with ultimate value, nor should we deny them their relative truth. As our grasping for egos and love for ourselves lack substantial foundations with true independence, how can they yield acts that exist by themselves? And then how can this cruel vicious circle of suffering, the fruit of these actions, be real from its core?

(109) Although all things thus lack inherent existence, yet just as the face of the moon can be seen in a cup of clear water reflecting its image, the various aspects of cause and effect appear in this relative world as reflections. So please, in this world of appearances only, let's always be sure what we do is of virtue and shun all those acts that would cause us great pain.

(110) When our bodies are charred in a horrible nightmare by the world-ending flames of a stellar explosion, although this ordeal is not actually happening, we nevertheless feel great terror and scream. In similar fashion, unfortunate rebirths in hells or as ghosts are not actually real, and yet we can fully experience their pain. Thus fearing such suffering as burning alive, we must cease all these actions that yield this result.

(111) When our minds are delirious, burning with fever, although there's no darkness, we feel we are plummeting further and further into a black pit with the walls pressing closer the deeper we fall. In similar fashion, although our dark ignorance lacks self-existence, we nevertheless must by all means break out of its strangling constriction by putting the three kinds of wisdom [21] to use.

(112) When musicians are playing a beautiful melody, should we examine the sound they are making we would see that it does not exist by itself. But when we're not making our formal analysis, still there's a beautiful tune to be heard, which is merely a label on notes and on players, that's why lovely music can lighten sad hearts.

(113) When we closely examine effects and their causes, we see that they both lack inherent existence: they can't stand alone, either whole or apart, yet there seem to exist independently rising and falling events, which, in fact, are conditioned by various forces, components and parts. It is this very level on which we experience birth and our death and whatever life brings. So please, in this world of appearances only, let's always be sure what we do is of virtue and shun all those acts that would cause us great pain.

(114) When a vase has been filled by the dripping of water, the first drops themselves did not fill it alone; nor was it made full by the last several drops. It was filled by an interdependent collection of causes and forces that came all together – the water, the pourer, the vase and such things.

(115) It's precisely the same when we come to experience pleasure and pain: the results of our past. Effects never come from the first causal actions, nor do they arise from the last several acts. Both pleasure and pain come from interdependent collections of forces and causes combined. So please, in this world of appearances only, let's always be sure what we do is of virtue and shun all those acts that would cause us great pain.

(116) When not making formal dissections with logic, merely letting life's happenings flow freely on, although we experience feelings of pleasure, in ultimate truth, this appearance of happiness lacks self-existence inherently real. And yet on the everyday operative level this seeming appearance has relative truth. To understand fully this deep profound meaning for slow-minded persons, alas, will be hard.

(117) And now, when we try to do close contemplation on voidness, how can we have even a feeling of conventional truth at the very same time? Yet what can there be that has true self-existence? And what can there be that lacks relative truth? How can anyone anywhere believe in such things?

(118) Just as objects of voidness are non-self-existent, the voidness of objects itself is the same. The shunning of vice and the practice of virtue are likewise devoid of all mental constructions that they're independent, self-contained acts. In fact, on the whole, they are lacking completely all mental projections and all preconceptions. Thus, if we can focus our clear concentration on voidness without our mind wandering astray, then truly we'll come to be wondrous beings with a deep understanding of the most profound void.

(119) By practicing this way the two bodhichittas of the ultimate and the conventional truth, and thus by completing without interference collections of insight and merit as well, may all of us quickly attain full enlightenment granting what we and all others have wished.

## **Epilogue**

*The Wheel of Sharp Weapons Effectively Striking the Heart of the Foe* was composed by the great Yogi Dharmarakshita in his retreat in the jungle where many fierce animals prey. What this great yogi, the possessor of vast scriptural knowledge, the full powers of logic and deep profound insight has written here is the essence of the teachings of all his holy gurus. He always practiced in accordance with this essence in his fearsome jungle retreat during the degenerate age in which he lived.

From among his many disciples, Dharmarakshita transmitted these teachings to Atisha; and Atisha practiced them wherever he traveled in order to tame those who were most wild. When Atisha developed true insight into the two bodhichittas through these teachings, he composed the following:

*I went through much hardship abandoning royalty, but, by collecting much virtuous merit, I met my true guru, Dharmarakshita.*

*By showing me these supreme nectar-like teachings, he has granted me sovereignty over my mind; so that now I have attained all the forceful opponents, having memorized fully these words he has taught.*

*Although I don't favor a partisan viewpoint: whenever I study the various teachings I always make efforts to broaden my wisdom to see boundless wonders in every tradition; yet I have to admit that these teachings especially have been of great help in this age of decay.*

From among his many unimaginably great disciples in both India and Tibet, Atisha transmitted these teachings to Upasaka Dromtonpa, who had been prophesied to be his most fitting disciple by many of Atisha's meditational deities such as Tara. Atisha transmitted these teachings to Dromtonpa in order to pacify the minds of the disciples of remote Tibet who were difficult to tame. This work has been translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan by the fatherly Atisha himself and his spiritual son Dromtonpa.

### **Notes by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey**

*[1]* Yamantaka is the wrathful or forceful aspect of Manjushri, the emanation of the wisdom of the Buddhas. Yamantaka's wrath is directed against selfishness, self-cherishing attitudes, ego-grasping and grasping for true independent existence. These ignorant attitudes take the life of our chance to gain enlightenment, and thus Yamantaka's wrath is opposed to the great Lord of Death.

*[2]* Bodhisattvas, or brave ones, the spiritual offspring of the Buddhas, are those beings who have the enlightening attitude (bodhichitta) to work toward the attainment of Buddhahood, that is enlightenment, for the sake of all beings.

There are five points of similarity between bodhisattvas and peacocks:

1. Just as the colors of the peacocks' feathers grow more radiantly brilliant when they eat plants that are poisonous to other animals, bodhisattvas shine with blissful happiness by making use of such poisonous delusions as desire and attachment for the benefit of others.
2. Just as peacocks have five crown feathers, bodhisattvas have the attainment of the five graded paths for enlightenment.
3. Just as the sight of a peacock's colorful display gives us great pleasure, the sight of a bodhisattva uplifts our mind because of his bodhichitta.
4. Just as peacocks live mostly on poisonous plants and never eat insects or cause others harm, bodhisattvas never cause even the slightest harm to other sentient beings.
5. Just as peacocks eat poisonous plants with pleasure, when bodhisattvas are offered sensory objects, although they have no attachment to these objects, they accept them with pleasure to allow the donor to gain merit from his offering.

**[3]** There are three levels of training the mind according to the three scopes of motivation outlined in the lam-rim teaching of the graded course to enlightenment.

1. With an initial scope motivation, we work to attain a better future rebirth.
2. With an intermediate scope, we work to attain liberation (nirvana) from the vicious circle of rebirth (samsara) for ourselves alone.
3. With an advance scope, as a follower of the Mahayana path with bodhichitta motivation, we work to attain the full enlightenment of Buddhahood for the benefit of all beings.

The word now in the text indicates the importance of practicing the teachings with an advanced scope of motivation, having previously trained our mind along the lam-rim graded course.

**[4]** With an advanced scope motivation, there are two ways in which we can follow the Mahayana path.

1. By following the Perfection Vehicle (Paramitayana), it may take many lifetimes before we reach our goal of enlightenment.
2. By following the Tantra Vehicle (Vajrayana), however, we may attain enlightenment within one human lifetime. The word here in the text indicates the immediacy of practicing the tantra path with an especially strong bodhichitta motivation.



*[5]* The tantra system teaches many methods for the speedy attainment of enlightenment. Included among them is the use as a path the normally poisonous delusions. In order to use delusions, such as lustful desire, as a path, however, we must first be devoid of the self-cherishing attitude, that is the greedy attachment to our own self-interest.

In addition, we must have a sound understanding of voidness – the fact that all things, including ourselves, lack a truly independent manner of existence. To use delusions as a path without these two prerequisites is extremely dangerous and, far from achieving our intended goal, we may completely destroy our chance for attaining enlightenment.

*[6]* Any of the delusions may be used in the tantra system as an actual path to enlightenment. In the Perfection Vehicle, the delusions may only be used as a method for directly benefiting others when the circumstances demand it. They may not, however, be practiced as an actual path.

*[7]* The Three Jewels of Refuge are Buddha, his teachings (Dharma), and the monastic community (Sangha) of those who understand and practice these teachings. The Three Jewels of Refuge are also referred to in English as the Three Precious Gems, the Three Supreme Gems, or the Triple Gem.

**[8]** The practice of tantra requires receiving initiations. These entail the taking of vows concerning moral conduct and the giving of your sacred word of honor to follow the tantric practices in the prescribed manner.

**[9]** Cause and effect describes the universal law of karma whereby virtuous actions result in happiness and nonvirtuous actions in suffering.

**[10]** The practice from guru-devotion to tantra defines the range of the graded course to Enlightenment; see note **[3]**, above.

**[11]** Images of Buddha and the various meditational deities representing different aspects of a Buddha's enlightenment have an important use in both the Perfection and Tantra Vehicles. They are used as meditative aids for developing single-minded concentration (samadhi). By using such images as objects of devotion, we collect the merit to attain the physical body of a Buddha.

**[12]** It is never possible for us to experience the consequences of the nonvirtuous actions of others. Whatever suffering we have must be the result of nonvirtuous actions we ourselves have committed in the past.

**[13]** The six realms of existence are divided into the three higher and the three lower states.

The three lower unfortunate states of rebirth are those of the hell creatures, hungry ghosts (pretas), and animals. The three higher fortunate states of rebirth are those of the gods, anti-gods (asuras), and humans.

*[14]* We request Yamantaka to turn the wheel of sharp weapons three times. These three refer to

- (1) the conventional or relative level of truth on which conventional bodhichitta operates as the means for leading both self and others to enlightenment;
- (2) the ultimate level of truth on which ultimate bodhichitta functions as the wisdom understanding voidness, and
- (3) these two levels or grades of truth realized together.

*[15]* The four great opponents eliminate the necessity for us to experience the unfortunate consequences of our previously committed nonvirtuous actions. These four are:

- (1) feeling regret and disgust with our nonvirtue;
- (2) taking refuge in the Three Jewels of Refuge and meditating on bodhichitta;
- (3) offering our promise never to commit such nonvirtue again, and
- (4) performing and dedicating the merit of virtuous actions for the benefit of all sentient beings.

**[16]** Mantras are words of power, combinations of Sanskrit syllables used as invocations.

**[17]** Hum, dza and p'at are mantric seed syllables. The first repetition of each is for conventional bodhichitta, the opponent for our self-cherishing attitude. The second repetition is for ultimate bodhichitta, which destroys our ego-grasping.

**[18]** The sack of our body is filled with the five poisonous delusions of longing desire, fearful and angered repulsion, closed-minded ignorance, arrogant pride, and jealousy.

**[19]** The Three Baskets (Tripitaka) of Buddha's teachings concern disciplined morality (vinaya), discourses on meditation (sutra), and philosophy and metaphysics (abhidharma).

**[20]** We request Yamantaka to swing three times round his head his skull-headed bludgeon representing both the wisdom of egolessness, common to both the Perfection and Tantra Vehicles, as well as the non-dual wisdom of voidness and bliss. The three times he swings this bludgeon destroy:

- (1) ego-grasping,
- (2) our self-cherishing attitude, and
- (3) our defiled bodies of delusion produced by these two types of ignorance.

[21] The three kinds of wisdom can refer either to the wisdoms of listening, thinking, meditating, or to intellectual, conceptual, and non-conceptual wisdoms.

**Colophon:**

“*Theg-pa chen-po'i blo-sbyong mtshon-cha 'khor-lo*”  
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