

The Wheel of Sharp Weapons



A Mahayana Training of the Mind
by Dharmarakshita

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

I pray heartfelt homage to you, Yamantaka;
Your wrath is opposed to the Great Lord of Death.¹

- 1 In jungles of poisonous plants strut the peacocks,
Though medicine gardens of beauty lie near.
The masses of peacocks do not find gardens pleasant,
But thrive on the essence of poisonous plants.
- 2 In similar fashion, the brave Bodhisattvas²
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 life in the march for enjoyment,
Yet tremble with fear at the mere thought 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 desire³ 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 how 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 upon them 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 condition,
This is the wheel of sharp weapons returning
Full circle upon us from wrongs we have done.
'Till now we have always had a negative outlook,
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 have 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 spoiled,
This is the wheel of sharp weapons returning
Full circle upon us from wrongs we have done.
'Till now we have 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 have 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 are 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 have been shameless, not cared about others,
We have thought that our deeds did not 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 have 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 have held grudges inside us with anger
With thoughts of sly methods to cause others pain;
Hereafter let's try to have less affectation,
Not pretend to be kind while we harbour 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 Refuge⁷ 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 honour;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 hear and to think about what Buddha taught.
- 29 When sleep overwhelms us while practising 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 toward 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 effect⁹ could be slighted;
 Hereafter let's practise 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 have 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 have 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 honour our pledges;
 Hereafter let's keep all our moral vows pure,
- 37 When we are 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 have been misers, reluctant to share.
 The offerings we have 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 aspect
 This is the wheel of sharp weapons returning
 Full circle upon us from wrongs we have done.
 'Till now we have made images¹¹ lacking in beauty,
 By venting our anger we have 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 have 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 have been fickle and, stirred by base motives,
 Have courted only those who had 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 have 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 towards 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 have repaid loving-kindness with malice;
 Hereafter let's always accept others' favours
 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 is the wheel of sharp weapons returning
 Full circle upon us from wrong 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 had made.
 Our suffering is the wheel of sharp weapons returning
 Full circle upon us from wrong we have done.
 Hereafter let's always have care and awareness
 Never to act in non-virtuous 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 is the wheel of sharp weapons returning
 Full circle upon us from wrong we have done.
 Hereafter it is fitting in all of our lifetimes
 For us to live purely as monks or as nuns.

49 As it's true what I have said about self-centered interest,
 I recognise clearly my enemy now.
 I recognise clearly the bandit who plunders,
 The liar who lures by pretending he is part of me;
 Oh, what relief that I have 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 mantra¹⁶ 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'a! P'a!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 delusions,
 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 do not 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 favours,
 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 do not ever help them;
 We cannot be bothered to give that 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 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 or 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
 Do not harbour 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 criticise 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 have obtained 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 a 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 is our foe.
 Yet when someone without any true feelings for us
 Deceitfully tells us what we like to hear,
 Without taste or discernment we are 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 to especially 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 sceptic, 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 do not pay attention to what others tell us;
 We are 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 do not 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 with 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 are 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 do not follow proper procedures of study;
We say it is needless to read the vast texts.
We feel there is no value 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 have 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 do not do even once,
For improper behavior takes up all of 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 misgiving now wield your fierce weapon
And wrathfully swing it three times²⁰ ‘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 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 Through we have not a doubt, for we recognise 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 or 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 non-virtuous
 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 favoured 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 have 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 true.

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 practise these methods we shall soon overcome
 Our true enemies: selfish concern and self-love.
 If we practise these methods we shall overcome also
 False concepts of ego we hold to be real.
 Thus by joint meditation on Egolessness
 And on non-dual 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 there 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, any time, anywhere.
 They are 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 mind are delirious, burning with fever,
 Although there is no darkness, we feel we are plummeting
 Further and further inside 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 construction
 By putting the three kinds of wisdom²¹ 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 are not making our formal analysis,
 Still there is a beautiful tune to be heard,
 Which is merely a label on notes and on players
 That is 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 cannot 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 is 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 happening flow freely on,
 Although we experience feelings of pleasure,
 In ultimate truth the appearance of happiness
 Lacks self-existence inherently real.
 And yet on the everyday operative level,
 This seeming appearance has relative truth.

Epilogue

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 are independent, self-contained acts.
In fact, on the whole, they are lacking completely
All mental projections and all pre-conceptions.
Thus if we can focus our clear concentration
On Voidness without our mind wandering astray,
Then truly we shall come to be wondrous beings
With a deep understanding of the most profound Void.
- 119 By practising 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.

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 the essence of the teachings of all his holy Gurus. He always practised 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 Atisa (982-1054). Atisa practised them wherever he traveled in order to tame those who were most wild. When Atisa developed true insight into the two Bodhichittas through these teachings, he composed the following verses:

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 memorised fully these words he has taught.

Although I do not favour a partisan viewpoint –
Whenever I study the various teachings
I always make effort 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, Atisa transmitted these teachings to Upasaka Dromtonpa²² who had been prophesied to be his most fitting disciple by many of Atisa's meditational deities such as Tara. Atisa 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 Atisa himself and his spiritual son Dromtonpa.

This translation of the Tibetan *Theg-pa-chen-pohi-blo-sbyong-mtson-cha-bkhor-lo* into English has been prepared by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, Sharpa Tulku, Khamlung Tulku, Alexander Berzin and Jonathan Landaw at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, at the Headquarters of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Dharamsala, India, 1975.

Notes

- ¹ Yamantaka is the wrathful 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, Sons of the Buddhas, are those beings who have the enlightened Attitude (*Bodhichitta*) to work towards the attainment of Buddhahood, that is Enlightenment, for the sake of all beings. There are five points of similarity between Bodhisattvas and peacocks. 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. Just as peacocks have five crown fathers, Bodhisattvas have the attainment of the five graded paths for enlightenment. 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. Just as peacocks live mainly on poisonous plants and never on insects or cause others harm, Bodhisattvas never cause even the slightest harm to other sentient beings. Just as peacocks eat poisonous plants with pleasure, when Bodhisattvas are offered sensory objects, although they have no attachment for these objects, they accept them with pleasure to allow the donor to gain merit from his offering.
- ³ There are three levels of training of the mind according to the three levels of motivation outlined in the *Lam-rim* teaching of the *Graded Course to Enlightenment*. On the initial level of motivation, we work to attain a better future rebirth. On the intermediate level, we work to attain Liberation (*Nirvana*) from the vicious circle of rebirth (*samsara*) for ourselves alone. On the advanced level, 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 practising the teachings with the advanced level of motivation, having previously trained our mind along the 'Graded Course.'
- ⁴ With the advanced level motivation, there are two ways in which we can follow the Mahayana path. By following the Perfection Vehicle (*Paramitayana*), it may take many life times before we reach our goal of Enlightenment. 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 practising the tantra path with an especially strong Bodhichitta motivation.
- ⁵ The tantra system teaches many methods for the speedy attainment of Enlightenment. Included among these is the use as a path of 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, 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 practised 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 practise these teachings. The Three Jewels of Refuge are also referred to as the Three Precious 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 honour 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 non-virtuous actions in suffering.
- ¹⁰ The practice from Guru-devotion to tantra defines the range of the *Graded Course to Enlightenment*; of above, note ³.
- ¹¹ Images of Buddha and the various meditational deities representing different aspects of the Buddhas' 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 non-virtuous actions of others. Whatever suffering we have must be the result of non-virtuous 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 re-birth are those of the hell creatures, hungry ghosts (*preta*) and animals. The three higher fortunate states of rebirth are those of the gods, anti-gods (*asura*) 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 a 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 non-virtuous actions. These four are: (1) feeling regret and disgust with our non-virtue; (2) taking refuge in the Three Jewels of Refuge and meditating on Bodhichitta; (3) offering our promise never to commit such non-virtue 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 for invocations.
- ¹⁷ *Hum*, *dza* and *p'a* (spelled *phat*) 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 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 by these two types of ignorance.
- ²¹ The three kinds of wisdom can refer either to the wisdoms of acquaintance, contemplation and meditation, or to intellectual, conceptual and non-conceptual wisdoms.
- ²² Tibetan: *hBrom-ston-pa*.