

The Peacock's Neutralizing of Poisons

Dharmarakshita · Atisha & al.

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The Peacock's Neutralizing of Poison by Dharmarakshita

Section I

The peacocks roam freely in the forests of poison.

Homage to the venerable Lord Yama.

When he was born as the prince Vessantara,
He gave away his son, his daughter and his kingdom.
So too must you give away entirely, with no feelings of possessiveness,
The objects of strong attachment, your wealth and your friends and family.

When he was born as the prince Mahasattva,
As he nourished the tigress with his own flesh.
So too must you joyfully give to the flesh-eating demons
This illusory body which you cherish such care.

When he was born as the king Maitribala,
He nourished the Yaksha with his own blood.
So too must you compassionately give to the blood drinkers
This pulsating, bloodied heart so hard to extract.

When he was born as the merchant Jalabahana (Kheu Chubep),*
He rescued the fish by uttering the name of the Buddhas.
So too must you give gifts of the sublime dharma
To all those impoverished of spiritual teachings.

When he was born as the prince Get'n Chenpo,
He bore the evil teacher Lokdrup with great compassion.
So too must you be especially kind towards those around you
Who create disturbances through negative character and conduct.

When he was born as the monkey Bodhisattva,
He rescued an evil person from drowning in a well.
So you must you save the evil doers with compassion
With no thought for reward or recognition for your good deed.

Alas! There is no one who hasn't been my parent.
There's no joy even for an instance in this forest of samsara.
To the evil class your retribution must be like a donkey's horn.

Now despite the heroic example of the great Sage,
Which I've respectfully embraced if I fail to cultivate the antidotes,
Engagements in the practice of the heroic way become impossible.

Therefore, you should embrace the penance even at the cost of your life.

After the Buddha's display of transcendence in the bliss,
Those who aspire to follow in his footsteps,
If you do not cultivate these practices within your heart,
The threat looms heavily that sentient beings' happiness will cease.

O the heroic ones, you must therefore give up the easy life;
Come what may, even at the cost of your life, you must embrace hardships.
This is the practice of the heroic way;
And the first chapter of Extracting the essence of poisons.

Section II

The peacocks roam freely in the forests of poison.

Homage to the venerable Lord Yama.

O the heroic ones with enthusiasm listen to this teaching.
In the forest of samsara the peacock is attractive.
At the feet of a poisonous tree of the five afflictions,
No one delights in a medicine nurtured by poisons.

Against the boiling poisonous liquid of attachment and karma,
If you do not counter with something akin [in force] to attachment,
The threat of being led astray by the lustful ones looms large.
Pray, destroy this poison of attachment!

Towards the blossoming poisonous flowers of anger,
If you do not display wrath as the Lord Yama does,
The threat of being impeded by the hostile ones looms large.
Defeat this enemy and obstacles of anger.

Towards the sticky poisonous mire of delusion,
If you do not refrain as if you would from a decomposing corpse,
The threat of engendering negativity by the evil ones looms large.
So as if caught amidst delusion contemplate on equanimity.

Towards the blossoming poisonous tree of envy,
If you fail to discriminate as one would in terms of 'I' and 'you',
The threat of the dharma being destroyed by heretics looms large.
So as if in envy uphold the sublime dharma.

Towards the blossoming poisonous tree of conceitedness,
If you do not react with hostility as if you're haughty,
The threat of being deceived by the demons looms large.
So defeat your adversaries when upholding the Buddha's teaching.

Thus I shall tie together in this one chain of self-centeredness,
All forces of poisons, without a single exception,
Within the illusion-like perception of non-substantiality,
And like a peacock, I shall consume all such poisons as nourishment.

Though one may display diverse perceptions to other's mind,
At depth one should not lose the secure ground of disciplined antidotes,
But guard the ethics of virtue versus non-virtue dearer even to your own life.
Thus even if you suffer you should embrace [the path of] enlightenment.

Even if I've expertise in all forms of knowledge,
If I do not forego my own joys and pleasure,
The danger still exists of being caught in attachment and hostility.
Therefore, I shall beat this self-centeredness as one might a [charging] dog or a thief.

Even if I suffer throughout days and night,
If I do not contemplate the flaws of cyclic-existence in general,
The danger still exists of indulging in the causes of suffering.
Therefore, the thoughts of karma's ill consequences torment my heart.

Though this is so I shall apply all unwanted sufferings
As counter-forces to destroy the grasping at self.
Even if tens of millions rise up against me as the demon's army,
I shall abandon fear and the thoughts of 'I am.'

Even if I fall into unfortunate realms when working for others,
I shall joyfully embrace it with no feelings of regret.
Even if the executors of death came to rob me of life,
I shall not have beneficial rites performed for my sake.

Even if I have to carry the karmic burden of all beings,
As I'll be carrying a burden that is worthy of carrying I shall not complain.
Even if my body becomes afflicted by contagious diseases,
As it is my own doing I shall not seek to revert the situation.

Thus, if unwanted situations do not fall upon me,
How will I ever pursue the means of obtaining the wanted?
If the wise ones were to discern, all unwanted events are
Sources of all what we desire; so I'll [willingly] embrace them.

Thus if the heroic ones do not wear the armor
Willfully embracing all negative forces,
There will be no joy for the one who is within the cyclic-existence.
Therefore you should willingly embrace all things unwanted.

Such is the teaching to be practiced by the sublime,
From the example of the great Sage's life;
It is the entrance appropriate to the heroic ones;
And the second chapter of Extracting the essence of poisons.

Section III

The peacocks roam freely in the forest of poison.

Homage to the venerable Lord Yama.

The intelligent one who reflects on and examines

Six times day and night the flaws of cyclic-existence,
In general and in its specific forms, and is fearful because of this,
Will take and observe the precepts of individual liberation.

When they are thus endowed with precepts they've taken,
They will regard all beings as fathers and mothers,
Until they've attained perfect Buddha-hood.
And for their benefit, they'll take the precepts of aspiration and engagement.

By thoughts of love and compassion when they possess the aspiration,
Even if they themselves suffer in the forest of cyclic-existence,
They will think of it no more and will encounter the hardships
Even at the risk of their life for the benefit of others.

At that instant, when infinite others with negative character
Engage in infinite acts of misguided behavior,
Like a dream, or like an illusion, they'll be divorced of life.
They will reflect on their nature and perceive them within the ultimate expanse.

Thus when this non-substantial and non-appearing nature becomes manifest,
An added confidence arises that frees you from fear,
Thus with no thoughts or any apprehension,
I shall endeavor solely to work for other's benefit.

When you carry such [precious] burden of spiritual practice,
And the forces of darkness become ever more intolerant
Creating thick cloud clusters of impediments,
I shall scatter them across the pure space with gales of mantras.

When I utter the wrathful mantras with thundering sounds of HUM,
As I may develop the pride of a ferocious wrathful deity,
I shall recognize the sounds as musical tunes of an apparition
Emerging from a body that resembles a city of illusions.

In whatever ways this mind of mine cannot be found amidst diverse forms,
Thus, like the mind of a person that is a mere emanation,
It has never existed so let it rest in its natural place
Release it within the truth as seen [by those who] perceive the ultimate spectrum.

In whatever way or whatever thing arises as an enemy or a demon,
I shall think nothing of this and shall not attempt to reverse this;
Thus shall I trample upon hostility and attachment, and divisions of self and others.
I shall view all memories and perceptions as [forms of] wrathful Yamas.

At that point, I shall draw forth all beings without exception,
As fathers and mothers with no trace of doubt and with full certainty;
I shall treasure them in the compassion circle, free of distance and nearness.
I shall nurture them by means of two truths, free of any discrimination.

If you cultivate yourself in this way, you follow the example of the Sage;
If you conduct yourself in this way, you'll bring smiles to the face of the [Three]
Jewels.
To such a person, the dharma protectors naturally converge.

O the children of the Sage, be cognizant of these facts.

Thus I spit (tho les)* on the conduct that is bereft of conscience;
I feel revulsion at the conduct that is devoid of heedfulness.
This too is a practice that is appropriate of the heroic ones;
And this is the third chapter of Extracting the essence of poison.

Section IV

The peacocks roam freely in the forest of poison.

Homage to the venerable Lord Yama.

Even though, like Upali, you've reached the perfection of industry;
And, even though, like Ashvajita, your conscientiousness is highly commendable;
If you do not lead your parents on the path to enlightenment,
This is the way of a mere shepherd for you fulfil only your liberation and wellbeing.

Even though you achieve mastery of scholarship in the knowledge fields,
And that your reputation delights all those who are foolish,
If you do not uphold with your crown the great burden of the teachings,
All this is to be dismissed, like one would the performance of a mad man.

Even though you're held in high esteem by all as their spiritual teacher,
If you do not shoulder the great responsibility of the teaching as a whole,
In stead embrace and pursue your own self-centered objectives,
You deserve to be spit at by the Arya noble beings.

Even though other's take pride in your image of goodness;
The self-grasping thought roams restless in the forests of wrong views;
You should fear it as if you would to the tigress that devours its own cubs.
This is something to be destroyed by the oath-bound protectors.

Even though you're clad in saffron and have the countenance of tranquility,
If, like the cat [left among pigeons], you harbor ill wills,
This is indeed an irreparable conduct for someone in the noble guise.
You then deserve to be thrown into the mouth of the female demons (ma mo).*

Even though you sit at the head of ninety thousand [people],
If, like Vishnu, you remain untamed at heart,
And emit rays of attachment and hostility to all ten directions,
You then deserve to be thrown into the mouth of the Yamas.

Even though you may treat all with smiles and kindness,
You follow after the self and thus enhance inner pollutants.
Therefore the fame of being the chief amongst all the faithful ones
Is to be hidden deep in the nest where the mode of all beings converges.

Even though you've entered the dharma gateway and left behind the family,
Like a householder, you still possess infinite chores and tasks,
And you disregard all ethical norms of adoption and avoidance.
This is certainly to be despised by the accomplished sages.

Even though you wear robes you do not observe the precepts,
Your perceptions remain permeated by the various tasks of attachment;
And you criticize and denigrate the noble beings.
This is deserving of being exterminated by the Dakinis.

For sake of material gains you adopt the guise of a noble one;
Yet, like the dogs and pigs, you indulge in sexual acts [with no restraint];
Those who deceive others by professing to be practicing tantra,
Deserve to be thrown into a [burning] hearth by the realized Vajra holders.

In the name of Mahayana, one disregards the laws of karma and its effects;
In the name of emptiness, one betrays one's students and groups;
Like a possessing demon, one disguises as a deity's form;
This is to be subdued with mantras by those bound by solemn oaths.

With no benefit whatsoever to the teachings as a whole,
One displays pretense of tantra and some profound instructions,
These negative verses strung together by confused conceptions,
Are to be brought down as trivial by the noble persons.

If it definitely harms the teachings as a whole,
Even if brings some benefits for some at certain times,
Like giving rice beer to someone suffering from intense fever,
It is destructive and deserved to be cast away into the waters.

Those harmful 'mystics' who possess little learning,
When they see common feats they become supremely inflated with conceit;
Such people who lead others with no guidance through the stages of the path,
They deserved to be belittled and brought to shame by the learned ones.

When enemies of the dharma rise up with threats,
Displaying pretense of kindness through commitments to individual liberation,
And not taking the side of the well-spoken teachings,
The noble ones are appalled indeed by such behavior.

Let alone the [attainment] of individual liberation,
One is likely to depart to the greatly unfortunate realms,
Pray, do not save those who destroy the teachings;
Such obstructive enemies, who're degenerate, should be driven beyond the shores.

However, with no concern for the teachings and beings as a whole,
Those who, out of anger, drive to the other shores with mantras
The enemies who cause harm upon one's own self,
Such conduct is shocking whether or not one is degenerate in one's precepts.

In brief, that which is repulsive to the Buddhas -
- the pursuit of one's own selfish ends -, I shall shun at all times.
That which is commended by the Buddhas of ten directions,
Whatever it may be it is worthy of engagement.

Be cognizant of this, O the intelligent ones.
Engage in all the practices right from start to the end;
Avoid that which contradicts the dharma even it costs your life;

Never do anything harmful to all but help self and others as much as one can.

Though the foolish may not see these truths even after a passage of time,
They are evident and vivid to the learned ones.
This too is a gateway for the heroic ones;
And the fourth chapter of Extracting the essence of poison.

Section V

The peacocks roam freely in the forest of poison.

Homage to the venerable Lord Yama.

O appear before me, with no exception, all those of the dark side,
Who harbor ill will and are filled with hostility -
O you millions and billions of flesh-eaters and blood-drinkers,
Today appear before me, this corporeal being.

O appear before me, the assembly of gods, nagas and yakshas,
Odor-spirits, demigods, and belly-crawling demons,
The infinite numbers of hungry-ghosts who roam in space,
And hosts of the karmic debtors, the element spirits.

O stand before me, the spirits of the good conscience and the sages,
The obstructers, those who lead to the false ways, and the eighteen great possessors,
The female demons, and all the guardians of activities,
The Three Jewels, and the assembly of arya noble beings.

O listen to me, I shall recount a story of great significance
Of the pledges I've taken without the slightest hesitation
In the presence of such witnesses who're gathered here
Encompassing in their entirety both samsara and its transcendence.

Owing to the good fortunes of the past
Today I've obtained the form endowed with ten opportunities.
As days and nights pass with feelings of wonder,
Why am I not embarking on the path of benefit and joy?

Because of the purity of aspirations I've gone beyond the household;
Discarding selfish ends, I wear as my clothes the aspiration and engaging minds;
Finding the supreme mind, I carry the responsibility of other's welfare;
Entering the path, I eat as nourishment the supreme bliss.

Listen to this tale again, O you who've gathered here.
Such ferocity there is in the ill acts of the dark forces;
Such impoverished level is the merits of the unfortunate ones;
I do not yearn anymore to depart to the lands of bliss.

Infinite are the element spirits who're bereft of meritorious stores;
Acute indeed are the sufferings of the unfortunate realms;
So negative are the deeds of those of evil behavior;
I no longer find delight in seeking the state of tranquility.

The virtuous acts of the childish are easily reversed;
Powerful indeed are the thoughts and deeds of the demonic forces;
There is no pausing time within this transient life of ours;
I no longer find delight in abiding in places of solitude.

There exist many who're hostile and are enemies of this dharma teaching;
Thus those realized mystics who've gone to the secure grounds
Appear unbecoming in today's age of degeneration;
I no longer find delight in seeking the land of the sky-goers.

Now even if all the powerful ones of the entire world systems
Were to rise up as my sworn enemies,
I'll not be shaken - not even the hairs of my body shall move;
[Instead] I'll put on the armor while being in this samsaric realm.

Where contagious diseases afflict beings,
And when great epidemics threaten the entire world,
I shall put on the great, fierce armor,
By turning into the physicians or nurses.

As I nurture all beings without exception with acts of kindness,
If some vex me and cause distress with extremely negative acts,
Towards them, I'll especially generate thoughts of benefit and kindness,
Thus I shall put on the armor of the heroic ones.

When ferocious man-eating tigresses await in ambush,
And charge at people threatening their lives,
To save beings, I shall put on the armor
By going at the site with no hesitation or doubt.

All the varied misfortunes that afflict the world,
The most unwanted events pervading like clouds of darkness,
I shall evoke them as charms thus putting on an armor,
To destroy the enemy, the very negative character itself.

All that is definitely unnecessary in this universe,
Such as karma, afflictions and the turbulence of illusions,
I shall willfully embrace them thus put on an armor,
To forcibly divorce the self-grasping of its life.

PHAT YA HO YI, MARAYA to the lord of death;
JARAYA, to the life-essence of demon, the comfort seeking wish;
Split it open, split it open, the heads of laziness and procrastination;
Pray, sever utterly the ties to cyclic-existence.

As we undergo sufferings in this cycle of existence,
And search to the foundation stones of this state of affairs,
I see the king that is the thought 'I am'
Residing in the palace of my heart amidst conceptions.

When I thus place the blame on this and combat with it,
What can I say, for the self has penetrated since time with no beginning?
The self thoroughly permeates the outer, inner and the in between!

It is familiar to truth, lies, and the six classes of consciousness.

Who should one combat with for one is one's own enemy?

Who will save whom for one is one's own savior?

One is one's own witness for all omissions and transgressions.

One will thus be freed if one can tame one's own self.

When others tame others it leads to conflict and dispute;

Where conflict and dispute exist there negative beings certainly converge;

Those filled with attachment and anger have no chance of a release.

Therefore, the yogin who is devoid of any preconceptions,

Why should he utter A LA LA this is so?

MARAYA to the life-essence of that which grasps at existence;

JARAYA to the life-essence of that which grasps at nonexistence.

As the self-grasping king is the real culprit, destroy the chief!

If you fail to tame the principal mental consciousness,

The threat of being led by the self-grasping king looms large.

When you've tamed the principal mental consciousness,

The other chiefs such as the eyes and so on are subdued.

Therefore tame this mental consciousness.

As there is no form, no sound, no smell and so on,

The grasping at self and its belongings will be no more.

The king of preconceptions will thus be starved of conditions.

Thus, when you utter these to the king himself preconceptions are freed,

In their own natural place and recognized as the ultimate sphere;

The six classes [of consciousness] are unreal as elephants of illusion;

Subjects and objects are unreal as the deeds of an apparition.

In these ways destroy the preconceptions from their roots;

Transform into the sphere of self-view this absence of subject and object;

As no 'I' and 'you' [division] exist, attachment and anger are placed in their innate state;

Like the horn of a rabbit there are no sharp minds and the blunted,

Thus rob the discrimination between the higher and middling capacities of its life.

Like the offspring of the barren there are no cleverness and slow-witted,

Wrap the entire samsara and its transcendence into one equanimity.

Like the hair on a turtle's body there are no long and short things,

Awaken all births and deaths into the great middle way.

Like echoes all that is primordially empty

Wrap into one sublime truth all phenomena of conventional reality.

AH, AH, in this sphere of unborn space-like nature,

IH, IH, this transcendent body devoid of conceptual elaboration,

OM, OM, recognizing this as the ever-pure dharmakaya,

May I be nurtured by the kindness of KARUNIKA.

COLOPHON

This work entitled The Peacocks Roaming in the Forests of Poison has been composed by me, Dharmarakshita, being motivated by the great compassion that does not objectify sentient beings. This is a yogin who resides in the black mountain and who, after having trained his eyes of intelligence in the innumerable fields of knowledge, has attained the infallible power of the laws of karma and its effects.

[End]

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