



Course XIV  
Lojong, Developing the Good Heart

*Answer Key, Class Eight*

1) Name the person who wrote out the *lojong* or instructions for developing the good heart named "Wheel of Knives." Give also his approximate dates, and name the person to whom he gave this work as a teaching. (Tibetan track name the two people, and give the title of the text, in Tibetan.)

**The work was written down by the Indian master Dharma Rakshita and presented to Lord Atisha (982-1052) as a teaching. The title in Tibetan is *Tsoncha Korlo*, and the author and his student's names in Tibetan are *Dharma Rakshita* and *Jowoje*.**

མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།

*tsoncha korlo*

ཏཱ་ལྷ་འཁོར་ལོ།

*dharma rakshita*

ཇོ་བོ་ཇེ།

*jowo je*

2) Give a description of a "wheel of knives," as found for example in the teaching by master Ngulchu Dharma Bhadra (1772-1851) on the Stage of Creation for the secret teaching of the angel known as "Frightener" (Bhairava).

**Here a wheel of knives is described as a wheel made of iron, having many spokes made of knives sharpened on both sides of the blades, without any rim around the outside of the wheel. At the center or hub of the wheel is a space that allows you to put your fingers, so you can throw the wheel at someone. So it is sort of a big "ninja star," or perhaps we can think of it as a razor-tipped boomerang.**

3) The text of the "Wheel of Knives" describes how bodhisattvas in the vicious circle of life are like peacocks who actually find poisonous plants more nutritious than medicinal ones. The idea is that the bodhisattvas can transform inner afflictions and outer difficult situations into precious opportunities for personal practice and helping others. Does this also mean that a bodhisattva would try to feel a mental affliction in order to somehow use it for good, or purposely stay in samsara or the vicious circle of suffering, in order to help others?

**All mental afflictions leave negative imprints on our minds that come back to hurt us later; so although when they get a mental affliction bodhisattvas know how to turn it around and learn something from it, they would never purposely get one to do so. Nor would they purposely "stay" in the vicious circle of life, the world of mental affliction and negative karma, for the good of others; rather, they are pledged to reach highest bliss as quickly as possible so they can be of true help to others. To think the other way is a serious mistake, and there is even a bodhisattva vow against doing so; it is included in the secondary offenses.**

4) What state of mind is described as "the henchman of the devil"?

**Grasping for yourself; which in one sense means working only for our own happiness, and in another sense means seeing ourselves as self-existent, as not being a product of our past karma, not being a projection forced on us by what we have thought, spoken, or done in the past.**

5) According to the text, each unpleasant thing or event that ever happens to us is a result of "what goes around comes around": the things we have done to others are returning back to us like a wheel of knives. In the blank next to each of the problems, write the letter of the real cause that the text says brought it about.

- e Those who are supposed to help me hurt me instead.
- g I find myself getting sick a lot.
- c I have different kinds of mental suffering.
- b People around me are bossy.
- a People say unpleasant things to me.
- m Unpleasant things often happen around me.
- l I have trouble finding friends and other people to help me.
- k People act in an intimidating way to me.
- d I feel depressed a lot.
- h Whatever I try to do never seems to work out.
- n No matter what I do, my Lama never seems to be pleased.
- j People seem to criticize everything I do.
- i The people around me can't seem to get along with each other.
- f I have had, or have, some very serious health problems.
- o I tend to get serious headaches or pains in my body.
- p I often feel anxiety or worry.
- r I don't have enough money.
- q I don't look very good physically.
- s I have trouble keeping my spiritual practice regularly and alertly.
- a) I engaged in divisive talk in the past.
- b) I was arrogant towards those less than me in the past.
- c) I upset other people in the past.
- d) In the past, I encouraged other people to do bad deeds.
- e) I failed to keep my mind on goodness in the past.
- f) I misused resources dedicated to the Dharma.
- g) I did harm to the bodies of other people in the past.
- h) I hindered the work of holy beings in the past.
- i) In the past, I wished bad things on others, and split people into sides.
- j) In the past, I displayed a lack of personal conscience and consideration of what others would think of my actions.
- k) In the past, I said bad things about spiritual people.
- l) In the past, I split up other people who were close to each other.
- m) I failed to think of my world and the people in it as special and holy in the past.
- n) In the past I was insincere and hypocritical in my Dharma practice.
- o) I didn't keep my spiritual promises and pledges in the past.
- p) In the past I did wrong deeds against Angels and the secret teachings.
- q) In the past I was an angry person, and didn't make holy images with the proper care.
- r) In the past I failed to give things to others, and to make offerings to the Triple Gem.
- s) In the past I behaved improperly towards the Dharma.

6) Suppose that we identify the kind of karma from our past that is bringing us the worst problem in our mind or in our life in general. Are we necessarily doing that same kind of karma now? What can we do about it?

**If for example we live in a place where there are lots of unpleasant smells and pollution, this is because we committed sexual misconduct in the past. We may or may not still have a problem with this kind of behavior now, because of the time lapse between a deed and its consequence. Nonetheless, one way to quickly stop most of the effect of this karma is to be *extremely careful* about doing even the smallest form of the same deed in our current daily life.**

7) Suppose we like another person but can't be close to them because of some third person who is always close to them. Discuss the difference between the "how" versus the "why" in this situation, and the apparent solution versus the real solution.

**The "how" in this situation is that the other person doesn't physically give us a chance to be near the person we want to be near to. But the reason *why* this is happening in the first place is that we in the past didn't let someone else get near someone they wanted to be close to. The apparent solution to the problem is to try to get rid of the other person somehow, which will always "backfire" or cause the wheel of knives to turn back on us. The real solution is to make very sure that we have no negative feelings toward the person, and that we be very careful to see that other people can be near the people they want to be near.**



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*Answer Key, Class Nine*

1) Halfway through the *lojong* or text on developing the good heart entitled *Wheel of Knives*, the author—master Dharma Rakshita—says that he has "finally realized just who my enemy is." Who is this great enemy? (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

**He is both the tendency of self-cherishing and its immediate cause: the habit of grasping to oneself as being self-existent, or having some nature of your own independent of your projections forced upon you by your past karma.**

རང་གཅེས་འཇིན།

*rang chen dzin*

བདག་འཇིན།

*dakdzin*

2) Upon discovering his true enemy, master Dharma Rakshita calls on a bloodthirsty monster to destroy this enemy. He "stands like a god on widespread legs," "stares in hatred with two eyes," and "opens his jaws and shows his fangs." Explain the symbolism of each of these parts of the monster. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

**The two legs are a knowledge of the two truths. The two eyes are method and wisdom. The fangs are the four forces for purifying bad karma.**

བདེན་གཉིས།

*den nyi*

ཐབས་ཤེས།

*tapshe*

སྟོབས་བཞི།

*tob shi*

3) How do you think a real fierce tantric angel, say the one called Yamari or the "Lord of Death" himself, would differ in nature from this symbolic monster?

**He is, in fact, exactly the same: the existence of a fierce angel is a projection of our own minds, forced on us by extremely powerful good deeds in the past, good deeds like a knowledge of the two truths and so on.**

4) Master Dharma Rakshita asks this monster to help him "smash the skull" of his enemy, who has "wasted his life." He asks him to "bring death to the heart of this butcher, my greatest enemy." This refrain continues throughout the remainder of the text. Whose skull exactly is he asking to be smashed? (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

**He is asking a tantric angel to help him destroy his misperceptions which consist of the tendency to see negative events as coming from their own side, rather than a boomerang of our own bad deeds coming back to us and making us see otherwise empty objects as unpleasant.**

ཏོག་པ།

*tokpa*

5) In slaying his newly recognized enemy, master Dharma Rakshita uses the wheel of knives now to cut the foe's own head. Explain just how this is done.

**The wheel of knives is the law of karma, the fact that what we do comes back to us. During our lives in samsara or the vicious circle of suffering, we react to negative things with negative actions, which again bring negative things to us, to be reacted to negatively, and thus we perpetuate pain. But the same principle can be used in reverse; we use method (bodhisattva activities such as giving and patience) and wisdom (an understanding of emptiness to accompany these activities) to collect, instead of karma, the two "collections" of merit and wisdom, which create the body and mind of an enlightened being.**

6) Towards the end of the *lojong*, master Dharma Rakshita says he would be willing to stay in the three lower realms if it would be of any help to even a single other person. Then he describes how weapons rained upon him by the hellguards would turn to flowers, as did the spears of Mara as she threw them at Lord Buddha as he sat under the Bodhi tree and reached enlightenment. Is this just a metaphor?

**It is not; a high-level bodhisattva may sincerely wish to stay in the lower realms to help others, but even this experience becomes for him or her something blissful, since their karma is so good it is forcing them to see all things as pure.**

7) The text says that life is an "illusion," that it is "unreal, like a face in a mirror," that it is a "mirage." What reason does master Dharma Rakshita give for saying this?

**He says that things are like an illusion because "everything we see is something that happens from something else." This is "dependent origination," meaning in its highest sense that all the things we see around us are productions of our perceptions, forced upon us by our past karma. So although the bad things and people around us for example seem to exist from their own side, they are in actuality produced by ourselves, and can only be removed by improving our karma.**

8) Master Dharma Rakshita says of the Enemy himself that "he is not there at all; he seems to be real, so very real, but nothing is real at all." Does this mean that our tendency to see things as self-existent doesn't exist at all?

**It means, of course, that the Enemy does not exist from his own side; this too is something empty, something that exists only through a projection of our own forced upon us by karma, and can be removed when our projections shift.**

9) The text says that neither the first drop, nor the last drop, nor any of the drops in between fills a pitcher. How does this relate to dependent origination?

**All of the parts of the raw data of an object must be combined before we can perceive it as something; and something else too is needed—the projection from our own side that synthesizes the object. No one of these by itself completes the picture.**

10) The text says that for our whole lives we are constantly mistaking a reflection of the moon in our teacup for the real moon itself. This is supposed to prove that we should do the good deeds we should, and not do the bad things that we shouldn't. What's the connection?

**The fact that certain circumstances have come together, like a little smooth patch of water in our teacup and the shining of the moon, and that this has created the appearance of the moon in the cup, is applicable to all other objects, which are created by the coming together of my own projections and the raw data on which they appear.**

11) Explain the following refrain from the end of the text:

And so I beg you be careful;  
Do those things that you should,  
And give up those things you shouldn't,  
If only in a movie.

**Nothing comes from its own side, and everything is a result of our own projections, playing by like a movie; but this not only *doesn't* mean that we can do anything we want—it means that we *must* do what is right, since we get real experiences of pleasure or pain, our whole world, through our projections.**

12) Comment on the following lines:

There is nothing you should practice,  
There is nothing you should give up.  
Strip everything of your perceptions.  
Leave your mind as it came  
From the beginning that never was.  
Don't confuse things by trying to understand them.  
Live in the place called as-it-is,  
And then you will become  
A high and holy being.

**There is nothing you should practice and nothing you should or could give up that comes from its own side. We should strip everything of our perception that they come from their own side. We should try to reach the direct perception of emptiness, where all of our ideas that things are self existent are gone, a knowledge of the primeval state of things that has always been there. Don't confuse things by trying to understand them in a way which doesn't explain them as karma and emptiness; and during the direct perception of emptiness, have no normal projections. Live in the place called as-it-is, in the sense of relating to the world by understanding how it is a production of emptiness and karma.**