



***The Wheel of Sharp Weapons***  
Mahayana Thought Transformation  
Hosted by Shantideva Center

*April & May, 2024 with Ven. Yönten*

*"Theg-pa chen-po'i blo-sbyong mtshon-cha 'khor-lo"* by Dharmarakshita,  
translated by Alexander Berzin and Sharpa Tulku, with Jonathan Landaw and Khamlung Tulku,  
based on an oral explanation by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, 1973.  
The version in this course is the poetic rendering. Used with permission.

Freely offered here:

[https://studybuddhism.com/en/tibetan-buddhism/original-texts/sutra-texts/wheel-of-sharp-weapons/wheel-of-sharp-weapons-poetic-rendering\\_](https://studybuddhism.com/en/tibetan-buddhism/original-texts/sutra-texts/wheel-of-sharp-weapons/wheel-of-sharp-weapons-poetic-rendering_)

ལོ་ཤོང་ *Lo-jong*: Thought Transformation / Mind Training

*Emphasizes*

གཏོང་ལེན་ *Tong-Len*: Giving and Taking Practice

*which develops*

བྱང་ལྷན་གྱི་སེམས་ *Jang-Chub-Kyi-Sem* / Bodhichitta

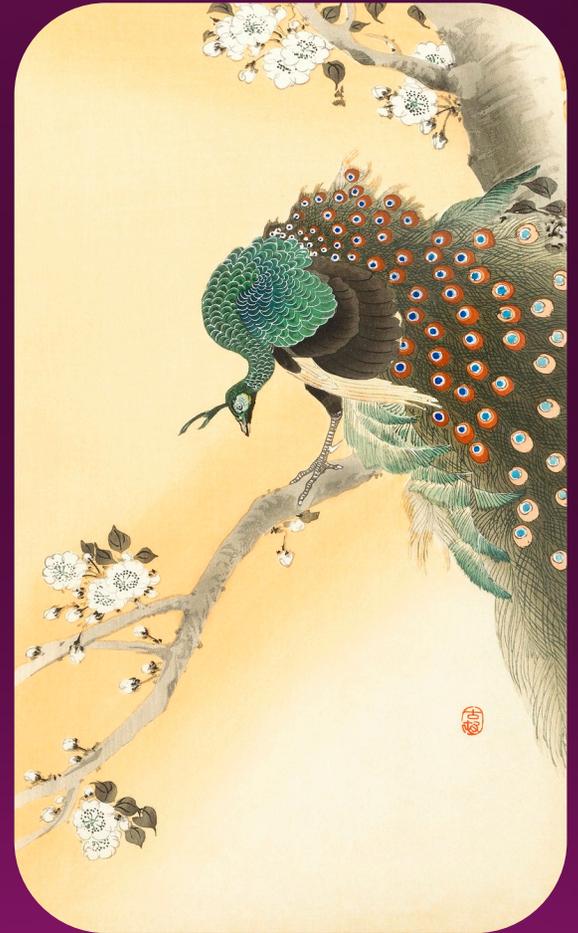
**BODHICHITTA** (Skt.; Tib. *jangchub kyi sem*) The Mind [a.k.a. Spirit or Heart] of Enlightenment: the altruistic mind that seeks enlightenment in order to benefit all sentient beings.

From: Tsering, Geshe Tashi. Tantra: The Foundation of Buddhist Thought, Volume 6 (pp. 197-198). Wisdom Publications.

The Two Bodhichittas described in *Lo-jong*: **Conventional and Ultimate** (see also aspiring and engaging) – related to the two aspects of reality and how to practice in response to each. *Lo-jong* practice describes both, which comes first will vary by author.

# The Wheel of Sharp Weapons

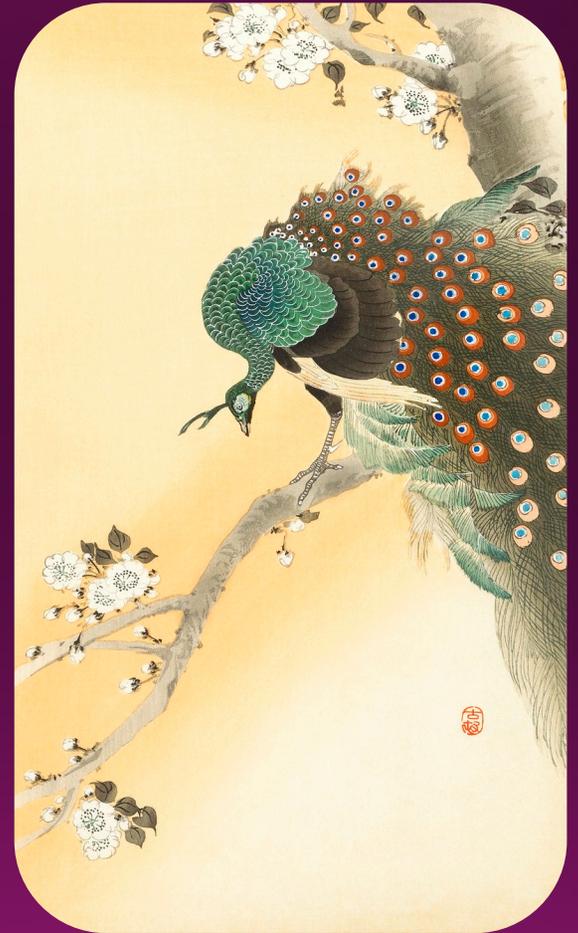
- This text is in the Thought Transformation “*lob-joung*” Tradition of Buddhism though it was composed much earlier than the other texts of that tradition.
  - This text came from the Indian Master Dharmarakshita, somewhere in the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> Century, beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. He was known for his great compassion and “*tong-len*” practice.



Other early references to Thought Transformation can be found in Nagarjuna's 'Precious Garland' and Shantideva's 'Guide to a Bodhisattva's Way of Life'

# The Wheel of Sharp Weapons

- It was then practiced and popularized by Dharmarakshita's famous student, Atisha (attributed to founding the "*Lam Rim*" tradition) who passed it to his Tibetan student, Dromtonpa.
  - Dromtonpa is perhaps who initially wrote down the text, as it only appears to originate in the Tibetan, having been orally transmitted prior to that.



# Brief Overview of The Main Themes in Wheel of Sharp Weapons



For example: the name of this work is

# ***The Wheel of Sharp Weapons***

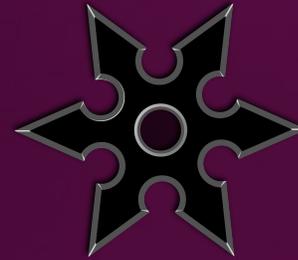
a.k.a. *The Wheel Weapon Mind Training*

a.k.a. *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons Effectively Striking the Heart of the Foe*



# Main Themes in Wheel of Sharp Weapons

The Wheel of Sharp Weapons itself



- analogous to our past actions being related to our current experience / negative karmic seeds ripen as current suffering experienced
- What we did comes back to us, behaving like a boomerang



## Example: Verse 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.





## Example: Verse 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.



## Examples of how NOT to think:



- I am bad and should be punished
  - Others are bad and should be punished.
- My pain is my fault and I deserve pain.
  - Other's pain is their fault and they deserve pain.
- This is fate or destiny. It is inevitable and out of my control.

## Example: Verse 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.

### Examples of how to think:

- The difficulty I am experiencing has a cause, not random or out of nowhere.
- My life is a series of causes and effects, as I see in the natural world.
- What is happening now relates to the past. How I respond creates my future.



# Main Themes in Wheel of Sharp Weapons

## Yama

- the Lord of Death
  - (karma and disturbing emotions)

## Yamantaka

- the Slayer of the Lord of Death
  - (wisdom and method / Ultimate and Relative Bodhichitta)

“I pay heartfelt  
homage to you,  
Yamantaka; your  
wrath is opposed to  
the Great Lord of  
Death.”

# Main Themes in Wheel of Sharp Weapons



## Yama

- the Lord of Death
  - Uncontrolled death is from karma and disturbing emotions

# Main Themes in Wheel of Sharp Weapons



## Yama

- the Lord of Death

- Uncontrolled death is from karma and disturbing emotions

- **Outer Yama**

The malevolent being living under the Earth in the South who seeks to harm sentient beings

# Main Themes in Wheel of Sharp Weapons



## Yama

- the Lord of Death
  - Uncontrolled death is from karma and disturbing emotions

## • Inner Yama

Longing Desire:

The craving and grasping that perpetuate the Wheel of Life (Samsara / uncontrolled rebirth) leading to death...

# Main Themes in Wheel of Sharp Weapons



## Yama

- the Lord of Death

- Uncontrolled death is from karma and disturbing emotions

- **Secret Yama**

The subtle dualism present even when the seeds of suffering are “burnt.” Imprints that exist until full enlightenment.

# Main Themes in Wheel of Sharp Weapons



## Yamantaka

- the Slayer of the Lord of Death

- (Interpretive) The embodiment of union of wisdom and method

- (Definitive) Ultimate Bodhichitta

- "wrathful"  
Emanation of Manjushri  
Whose sword of wisdom cuts ignorance



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.



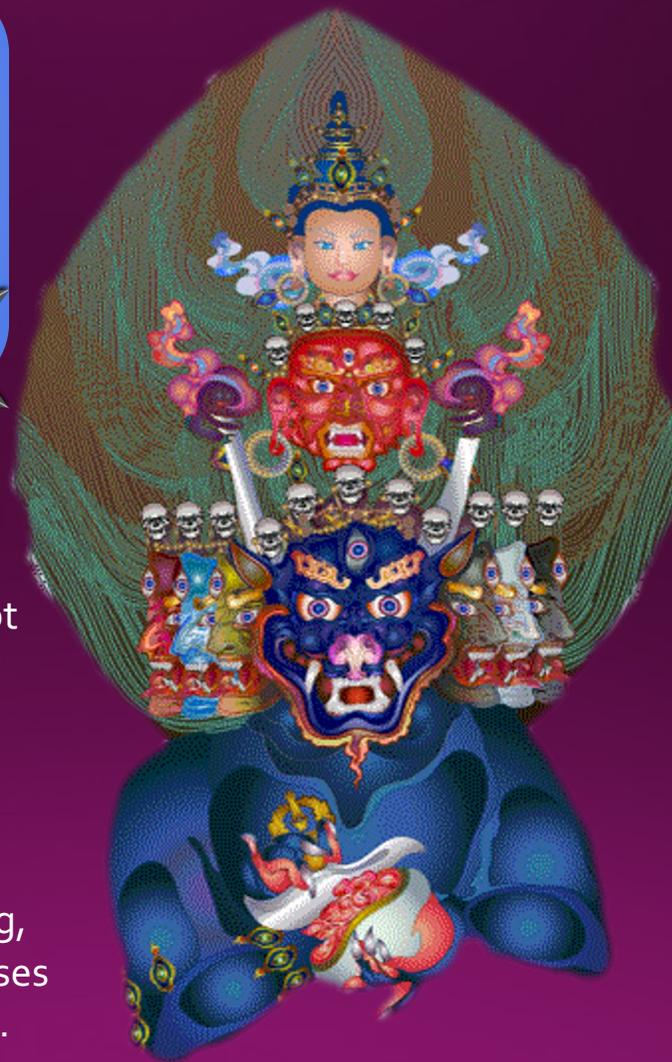
**An example of how NOT to think:**

If I want to stop uncontrolled birth, aging, sickness and death I need to be passive about my current conditions and just accept everything difficult that happens.

Maybe I should even seek out MORE suffering!

**An example of how to think:**

If I want to stop uncontrolled birth, aging, sickness and death I need to stop the causes and to purify previously created causes.

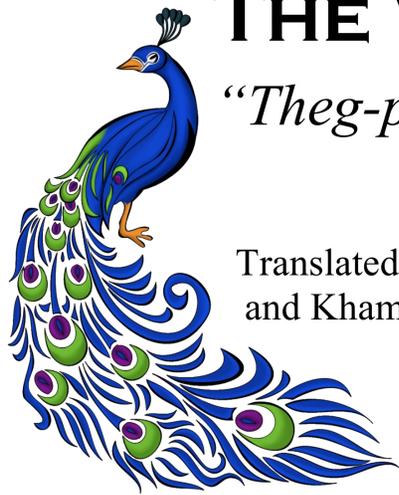




# Peacocks and Poison

Transforming  
what could  
weaken  
into  
what can  
beautify.





# 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

(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.



[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.

# Poison as Samsara

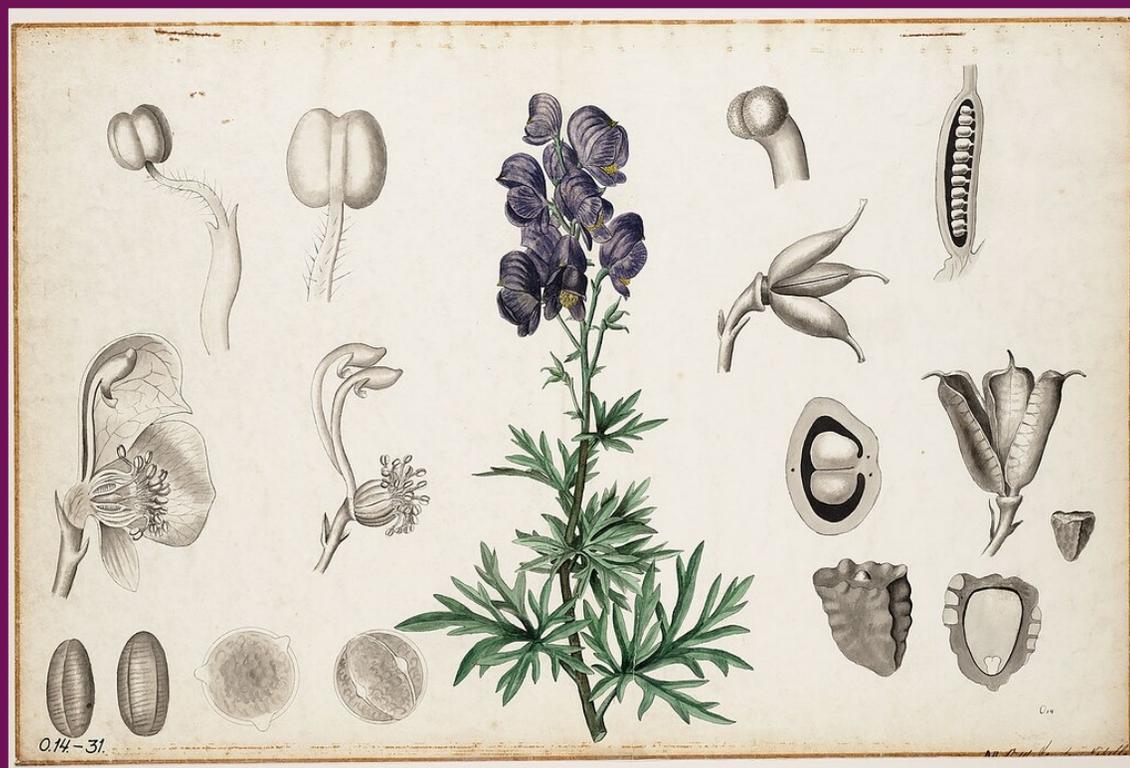


Blauwe monnikskap  
Aconitum napellus  
Aconite

[mediamatic.net/plant004](http://mediamatic.net/plant004)

Aconite / Wolfsbane

# Main Themes in Wheel of Sharp Weapons



Aconite / Wolfsbane

## Poison

- analogous to the danger of living in a samsaric environment and utilizing samsaric pleasures without renunciation and bodhicitta
- analogous to the danger of afflictions in general and challenges of suffering
- Aconite, though poisonous was used in small amounts in traditional medicine.



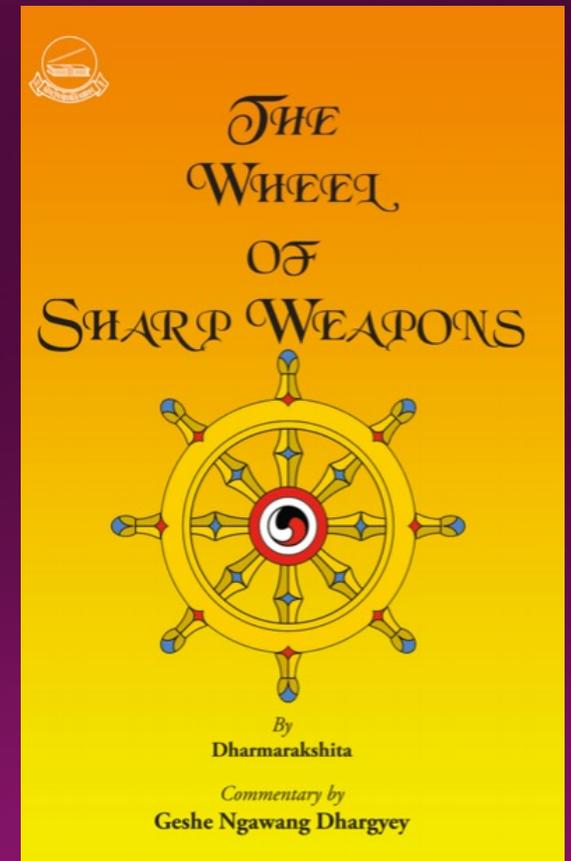
Bodhisattvas as Peacocks

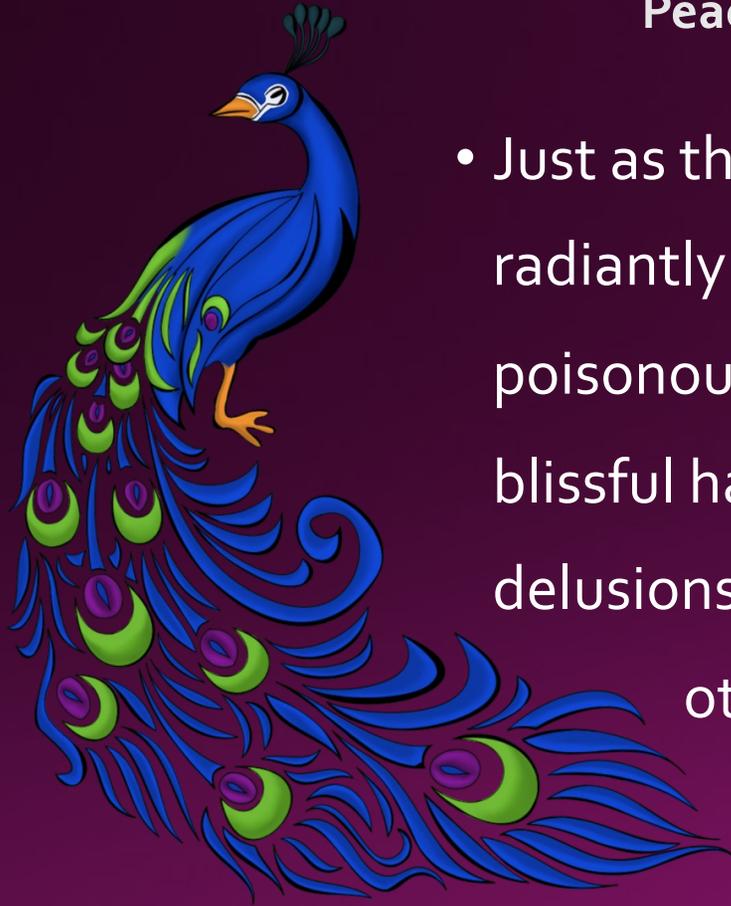
# Main Themes in Wheel of Sharp Weapons



Peacocks are analogous to Bodhisattvas in five ways.

From the commentary by Geshe Ngawang Dargye.



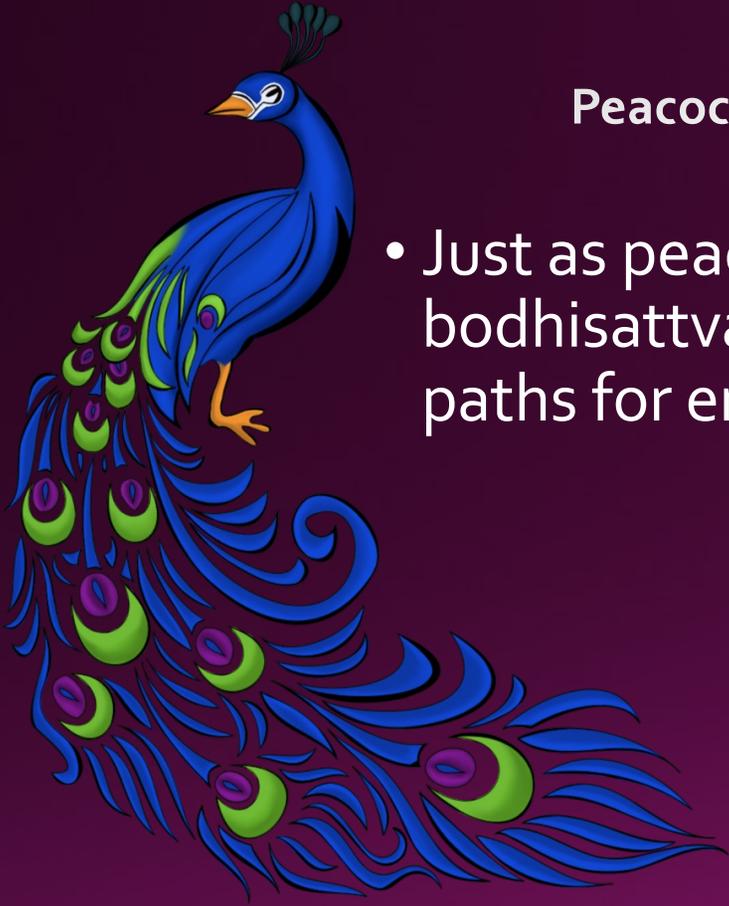


## Peacocks are analogous to Bodhisattvas

- 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.

## Peacocks are analogous to Bodhisattvas

- Just as peacocks have five crown feathers, bodhisattvas have the attainment of the five graded paths for enlightenment.
  - The Path of Accumulation
  - The Path of Preparation
  - The Path of Seeing
  - The Path of Meditation
  - The Path of No More Learning

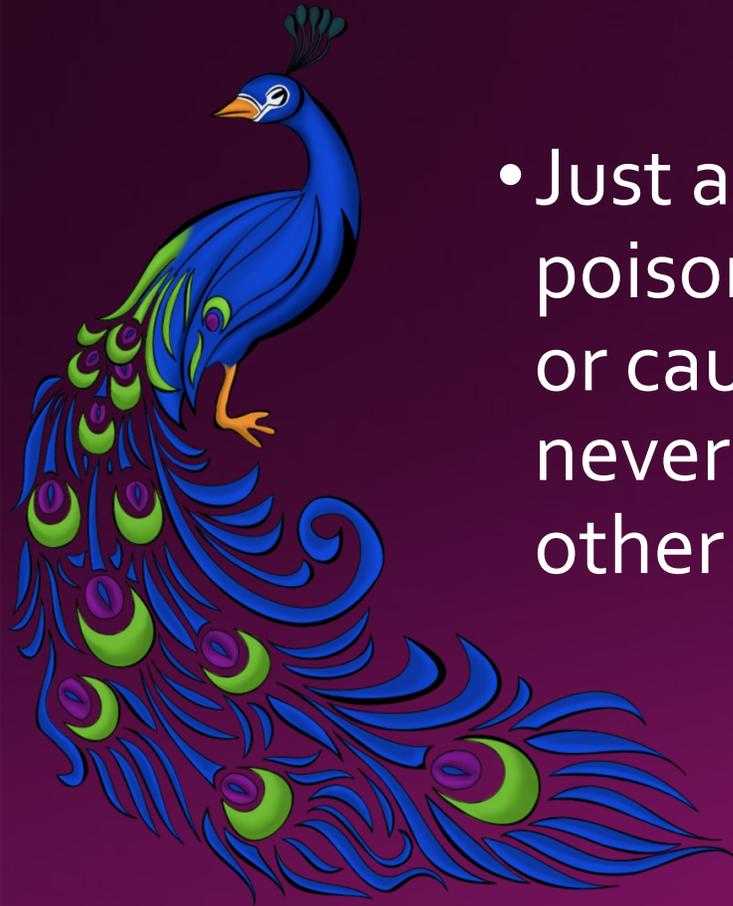


## Peacocks are analogous to Bodhisattvas

- Just as the sight of a peacock's colorful display gives us great pleasure, the sight of a bodhisattva uplifts our mind because of their bodhichitta.



## Peacocks are analogous to Bodhisattvas



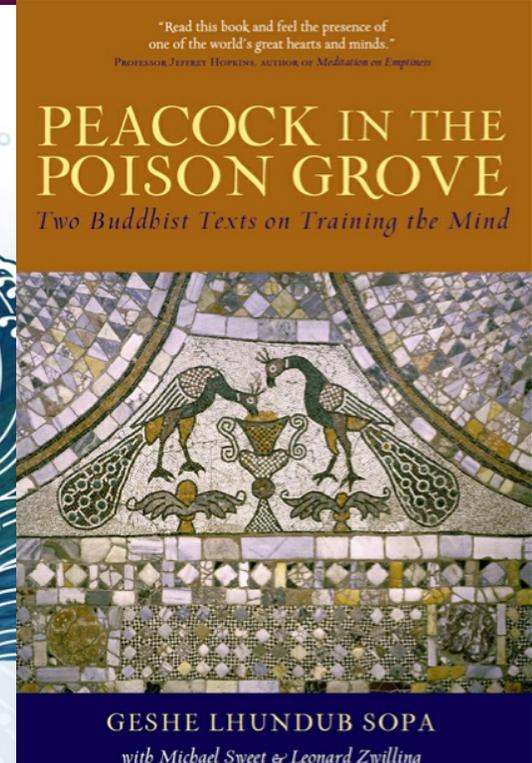
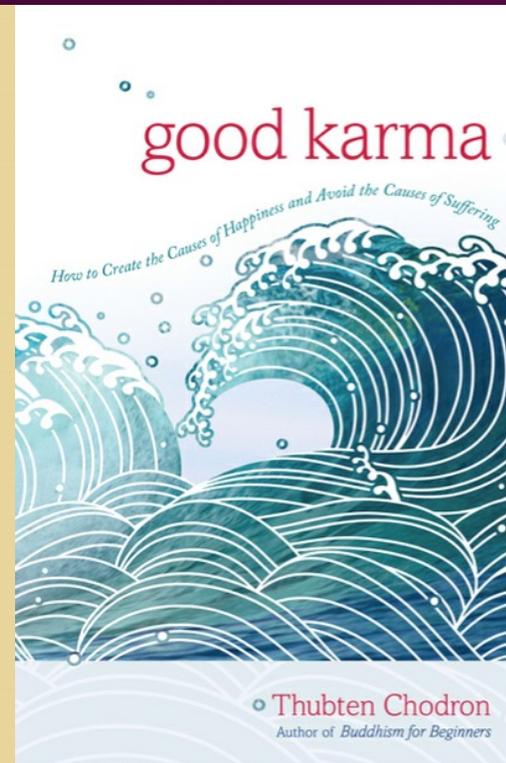
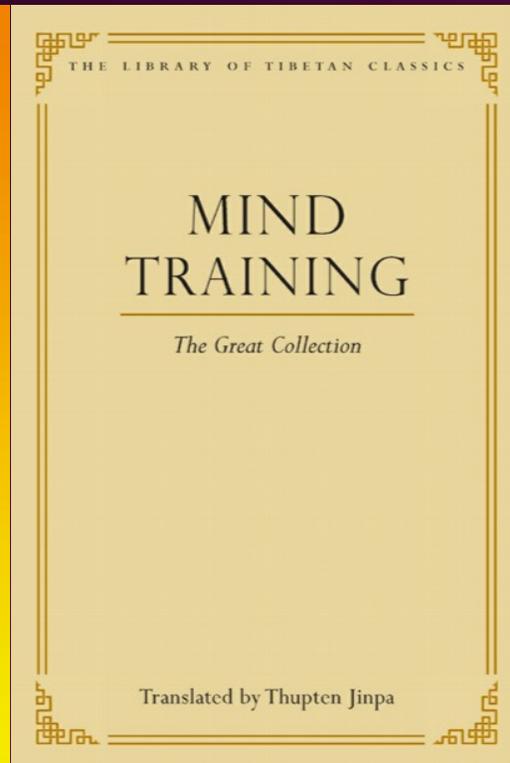
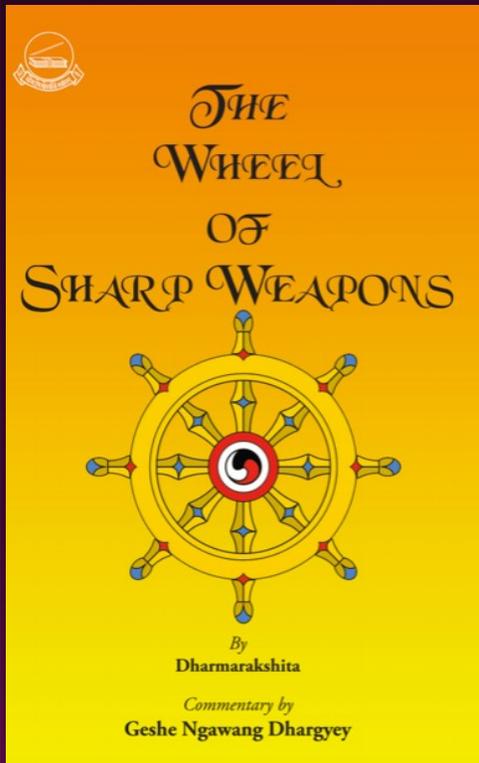
- Just as peacocks live mostly on poisonous plants and never eat insects or cause others harm, bodhisattvas never cause even the slightest harm to other sentient beings.

## Peacocks are analogous to Bodhisattvas

- 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 their offering.



# Recommended Reading



*The Wheel of Sharp Weapons  
Commentary*  
by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey

*Mind Training: The Great  
Collection*  
Translated by Thubten Jinpa

*Good Karma*  
by Thubten Chodron

*Peacock in the Poison Grove*  
by Lhundrup Sopa