



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_

Review

...the wheel of sharp weapons returning...



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

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



Results of Karma

Reviewc

(1) the ripening result

the body and mind we will take in a future life

(2) the causally concordant result

- experiential (*that is, we will experience a situation similar to the one our actions caused others to experience*)
- behavioral (*that is, we will tend to do that action again in the future*)

(3) the environmental result

our experience of the environment and climate where we live.

The Two Wings of Practice: Method and Wisdom

In Mahayana Buddhism,
the **union** of method and wisdom is
central to understanding and practicing
the path to complete
enlightenment/buddhahood.

The Two Wings of Practice:

Method (*thabs, upāya*).

Method refers to the altruistic deeds of the bodhisattva, including the cultivation of compassion and the awakening mind.

Wisdom (*shes rab, prajñā*).

The Sanskrit term *prajñā* and its Tibetan equivalent *shes rab* have different applications depending upon the context.

...In the context of the Mahayana path, *prajñā* refers to the wisdom aspect of the path constituted primarily by deep insight into the emptiness of all phenomena....

We can prevent or minimize negative karma from ripening as suffering

Purification

- Through Vajrasattva practice with the four opponent powers

&

*Mainly the **method** side of the path to enlightenment*



The four opponent powers

- Refuge
- Regret
- Remedy
- Resolve

- Through the Wisdom Realizing Emptiness (of inherent existence)

We can prevent or minimize negative karma from ripening as suffering

Purification

- Through Vajrasattva practice with the four opponent powers
- &
- Through the Wisdom Realizing Emptiness (of inherent existence) of the “three spheres.”
 - Agent
 - Action
 - Object

*The wisdom side
of the path to
enlightenment*



Basis: The Truths

Relative/Conventional Truth

- the way phenomena are misapprehended by ordinary beings due to ignorance

Ultimate/Absolute Truth

- all phenomena being empty of inherent existence

*Because of the basis
we practice the
path...*



Path: The Wings

Method : practices such as loving-kindness, compassion etc.

Wisdom : practices to realize the emptiness of inherently existent self and phenomena

Result: The Kayas

Rupakaya(s) – Form Bodies

Dharmakaya(s) – Wisdom Bodies

✓ **Basis: The Truths (conventional and ultimate)**

➤ **Path: The Two Wings**

1) Method : practices such as loving-kindness, compassion, *tonglen* etc.

Here, the practice of Relative/Conventional Bodhichitta

2) Wisdom : practices to realize the emptiness of inherently existent self and phenomena

Here, the practice of Ultimate/Absolute Bodhichitta

Path: The Two Wings

1) Method : practices such as compassion etc.

Relative/Conventional Bodhichitta:

The main Mahayana motivation
with two aspirations:
to become enlightened
for the benefit of all sentient beings

These aspirations become a main mind/primary consciousness
through study, deep conviction, repetition and meditations...



The Two Wings of Practice: Method

Verses from *Wheel of Sharp Weapons*

(46) In short then, whenever unfortunate sufferings we haven't desired crash upon us like thunder, this is the same as the smith who had taken his life with a sword he had fashioned himself. Our suffering's the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. 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, as well as our pains of the present and future, are the same as the case of the forger of arrows who later was killed by an arrow he'd made. Our suffering's the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Hereafter let's always have care and awareness never to act in nonvirtuous ways.

➤ **Path: The Two Wings**

1) **Method** : practices such as loving-kindness, compassion, *tonglen* etc.

Here, the practice of **Relative/Conventional Bodhichitta**

2) **Wisdom** : practices to realize the emptiness of inherently existent self and phenomena

Here, the practice of **Ultimate/Absolute Bodhichitta**

Wisdom: practices to realize the emptiness of inherently existence

Ultimate/Absolute Bodhichitta

The main Mahayana motivation

with two aspirations:

to become enlightened

for the benefit of all sentient beings,

→ in the mind of someone who has realized emptiness directly/perceptually.

The Two Wings of Practice: Wisdom

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

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

- ✓ **Basis: The Truths**
- ✓ **Path: The Two Wings**

➤ **Result: The Kayas**

- ❖ The actualization of our buddha nature/potential

Rupakayas – Form Bodies

- Enjoyment Body observable by Arya beings (*Sambogakaya*)
- Emanation Body observable by ordinary beings (*Nirmanakaya*)

Dharmakayas – Truth Bodies

- Wisdom Truth Body (*Jnanadharmakaya*)
- developed through realizing emptiness (developmental purity)
- Nature Truth Body (*Svabhavikakaya*)
- mind being empty of inherent existence (naturally abiding purity)

From the practices of method

From the practice of wisdom



The Two Wings of Practice: Union

Wheel of Sharp Weapons Verse 119

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

➤ Path: The Wings

What you *do* with Relative/Conventional Truth and Ultimate/Absolute Truth

(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.



➤ Path: The Wings

What you *do* with Relative/Conventional Truth and Ultimate/Absolute Truth

(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.



We achieve the **Perfection of Wisdom through several methods that help us access the reality of the self and all phenomena**

Essential steps include:

- **Recognizing the object to be negated**
- **Recognizing dependent arising**
- **Understanding the fallacy of belief in inherent existence and the logic of the emptiness of it**

The Two Wings of Practice: Wisdom

Wheel of Sharp Weapons Verse 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?

Essential steps to realizing the Perfection of Wisdom include:

Recognizing the object to be negated

- The “object” is the self and what is “negated” is it having the characteristic of being inherently existence.
- We “recognize” it through provoking it into prominence by remembering past moments of strong belief in it, then disproving the self’s existence, in an inherent way, through logic.

Quotes as a catalyst:
Dependent Arising reflection from
Wheel of Sharp Weapons

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

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



Essential steps to realizing
the **Perfection of Wisdom**
include:

*The “King of Reasons”
clarified by Lama Tsong Khapa
which is that:*

**“All phenomena are
empty of inherent
existence because they
dependently arise.”**

Essential steps to realizing the Perfection of Wisdom include:

Recognizing dependent arising

- All impermanent phenomena depend on causes and conditions in order to arise and function
- All permanent and impermanent phenomena depend on parts and whole, as well as context in order to arise
- All permanent and impermanent phenomena depend on mind's imputation on a valid basis.

Casual Dependency

Mutual Dependency

Dependency Through

Mere Designation

Essential steps to realizing the **Perfection of Wisdom** include:

Understanding the fallacy of belief in inherent existence and the logic of the emptiness of it

- Things do not exist inherently or have a “natural” (as in causeless) existence
 - because if they did, they would not have to depend upon other factors – they could spontaneously arise out of nowhere
- Things are not established by way of their own characteristics
 - because if they did, they wouldn't need to be imputed by language and conception because they would already exist because of their own characteristics / characteristics = creation
- Things do not exist from their own side (the side of the basis for designating it)
 - because if they did, then there would have to be something that is an illustration of it, that you can find amongst the basis for imputation / in or on that basis

Quotes as a catalyst:

**Understanding the fallacy of belief in inherent existence and
the logic of the emptiness of it**
reflection from *Wheel of Sharp Weapons*

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

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

Perfection of Wisdom – Summary reflection

- **Recognizing the object to be negated**
 - **The self seems inherent** – especially when upset
 - **See that it can't be inherent, that is impossible**
- **Recognizing dependent arising**
 - **For the self, others and all phenomena to “be,” there must be supports...**
- **Understanding the fallacy of belief in inherent existence and the logic of the emptiness of it**

The Two Wings of Practice: Wisdom

Wheel of Sharp Weapons Verse 112

When musicians are playing a beautiful melody, should we examine the sound they are making we would see that it does not exist by itself.

But when we're not making our formal analysis, still there's a beautiful tune to be heard, which is merely a label on notes and on players, that's why lovely music can lighten sad hearts.

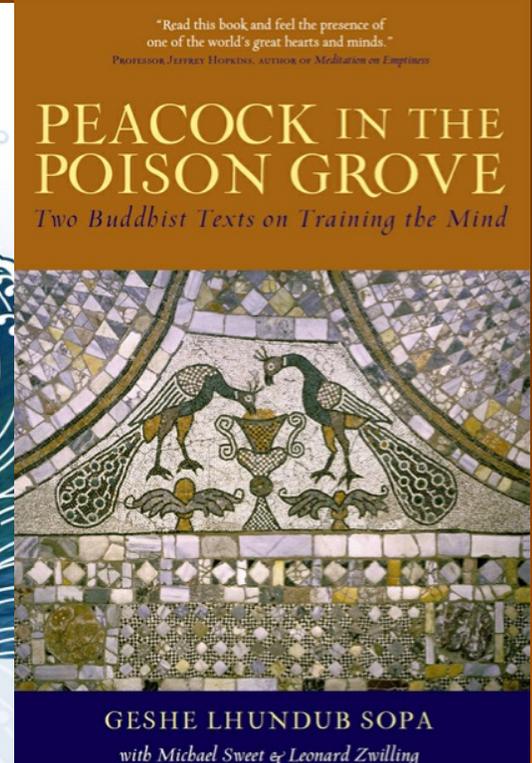
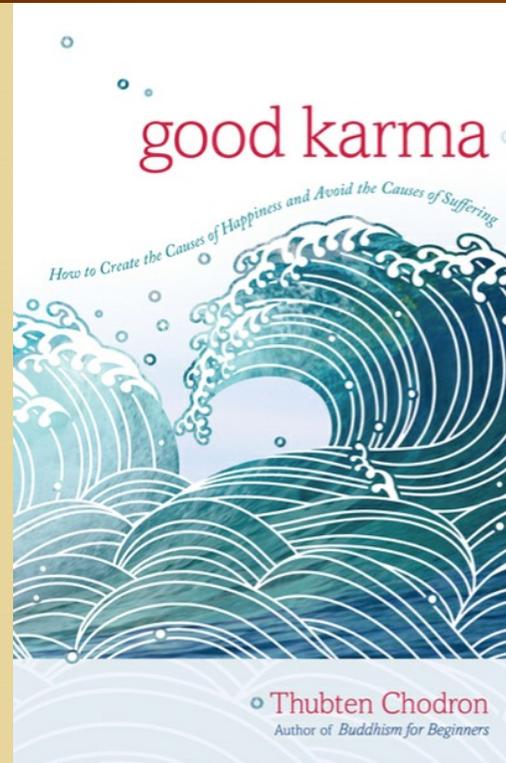
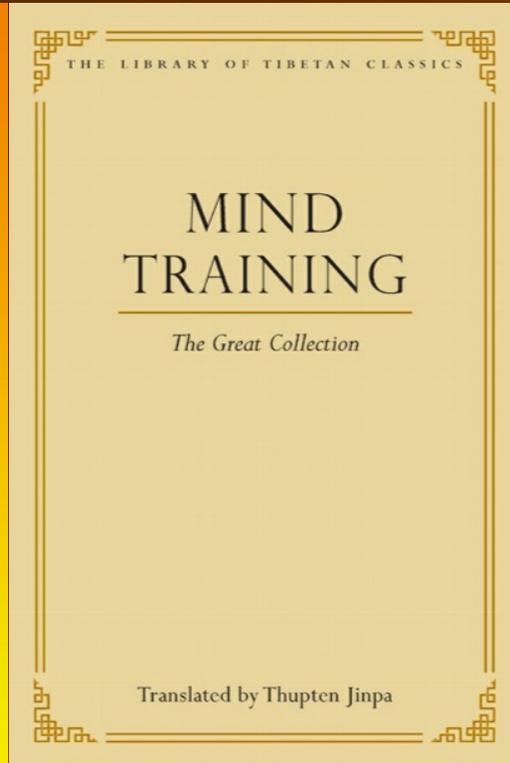
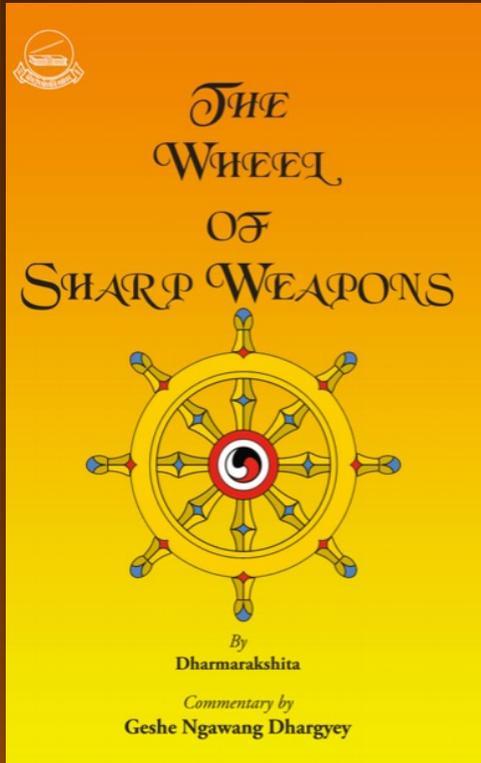
(97) Thus accepting ourselves all deluded nonvirtuous actions that others have done in the past, in the present and future with mind, speech and body, may delusions of others as well as our own be the favored conditions to gain our enlightenment, just as the peacocks eat poison and thrive.

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

Dedicate



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