

Transcript of the oral commentary by Khen Rinpoche Geshe Chonyi on Dharmarakshita's *Wheel-Weapon Mind Training*

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Lesson 9

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Benefits of cherishing others. The root text: Verses 15—20. Verse 15: Cultivating pure vision. Verse 16: Causing disharmony among others. Verse 17: Displeasing the holy ones.

BENEFITS OF CHERISHING OTHERS

Happiness of this life

Shantideva said in *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds*

All the happiness in this world comes from cherishing others.

All the problems and sufferings in this world come from cherishing oneself.

Perhaps we can use this verse as the basis for our continual reflection on:

- how all happiness comes from cherishing others
- how all our problems and sufferings come from cherishing ourselves.

Reflect on those times when we felt hurt by somebody saying something unpleasant to us and how we were disturbed when we met with some challenges, maybe even just small difficulties, in our life. It is evident that those feelings of being hurt or the mind becoming very uneasy and disturbed are all due to our holding the 'I' as being very important, cherishing it so much.

Conversely, if we were to reverse our attitude—that is, if we accustom ourselves to thinking of the happiness of others rather than emphasising our own happiness and if we view others as more important than ourselves—then even though we may be criticised by others and the unpleasant words remain the same, because of the difference in our attitude, we are not so disturbed. This comes from thinking more of others. The words are the same, but from our side, we experience less disturbance and suffering. This is quite clear if we think about it.

We should investigate and see for ourselves, looking at our own experience, whether this is true. We suffer more when we are overly obsessed with our own happiness compared to when we do not prioritise our own happiness over that of others.

When we believe that we are very precious and the most important person in the world, by having that attitude of holding on to the 'I' as more important than others, then even when we face very small problems, they become very difficult for us to bear and to tolerate because of our very strong self-cherishing.

Happiness of future lives

Besides the happiness of this life coming from cherishing others, the happiness of future lives and good rebirths as humans or celestial beings also come from taking care of and cherishing others. So cherishing others results in the happiness of future lives. We should understand how this is so.

The cause of a good rebirth—to be reborn as a human being or a celestial being—is the practice of ethical discipline, intentionally refraining from harming others. By not harming others, in a way, we are already taking care of and cherishing them. Due to this, we get a good rebirth in cyclic existence as a human being or a celestial being.

Having a pleasant physical demeanour or appearance and meeting people who help us in life are the results of having practised patience. Having wealth and prosperity are the results of having practised generosity. So likewise, the practices of generosity and patience can only be accomplished in dependence on taking care of sentient beings, cherishing and not harming them.

The opposite of this is not caring about the happiness or welfare of others but rather just focussing on our own happiness and following our self-cherishing thought. In the absence of cherishing others, we disregard them and create many different negativities such as taking the lives of others, stealing the belongings of others and not practising generosity due to our miserliness. All these negativities come from neglecting the welfare or happiness of others. Depending on the severity of these negativities, one will be reborn as a hell being, a hungry ghost or an animal.

If we take care of others and cherish them, we help them by practising generosity and refrain from harming them. We offer our service to others and also respect them. We will then experience the results of such virtuous actions in the future.

When we follow our self-cherishing thought and disregard others, we also feel disconnected from others. We feel that there is no relationship between others and ourselves. This can make us arrogant, looking down on others and again disregarding them. No one else other than us will experience the ripening results of these actions. Because of having disregarded the welfare of others and putting others down, from life to life, we will experience a similar result, i.e., others will look down on us, despising and disregarding us.

It is emphasised in the mind training literature and also in the stages of the path to enlightenment that we have to reflect thoroughly from various angles on the faults and disadvantages of self-cherishing. Likewise, we have to reflect from many angles on the advantages and benefits of cherishing others. These particular reflections are very important and crucial.

On the basis of understanding that cherishing others is the source of happiness, this should be reflected in our daily lives and practical actions that are within our means, such as giving material gifts and Dharma to others. Then, by continually relying on mindfulness and introspection, we should check our body, speech and mind and refrain our thoughts and actions from harming others. If we really understand the benefits and advantages of cherishing others, then in our interactions with others, we will generate love and compassion toward every sentient being and we will feel that every sentient being, whoever the person in question may be, is a merit field and presents an opportunity for us to accumulate merit. It is said that by understanding the benefits and advantages of cherishing others, one will look at every sentient being with affection and one will be able to respect him or her.

Pleasing the buddhas and bodhisattvas

It is said in the teachings that when we can look upon sentient beings with love, affection and compassion, then that really pleases the buddhas and bodhisattvas. When such feelings towards sentient beings arise, they become supreme offerings to the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

It is also said that if we look at sentient beings with the wish to harm them or with the attitude of disregarding them, then it is no different from disregarding the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

So if we really want to please the buddhas and bodhisattvas and make them happy, we should look upon sentient beings with affection and love, and benefit them. This becomes the supreme offering and is also the offering of practice.

It is said in the teachings that even if one makes a small insignificant offering to the buddhas and bodhisattvas motivated by love and compassion for sentient beings, the benefit is vast as the merit created is far greater than making vast offerings *not* motivated by love and compassion for others.

It is also mentioned in the teachings that if we analyse well, the gurus, our special meditational deities and sentient beings are all similar in being the ones who grant us the common and supreme realisations.

With respect to talking about mind training, we must understand that the most important essential point to grasp is how our self-cherishing results in all our problems and faults. We must reflect until we ascertain for ourselves how cherishing others is the source of all happiness. Only then can we talk about mind training and the various visualisations and mind training techniques that are covered in the mind training text, including this one. On the basis of having realized that first, then we can talk about the practice of *tonglen*, giving our happiness to others and taking on their sufferings upon ourselves.

The practice of tonglen

The practice of giving one's happiness to others and taking on their sufferings is a method to further enhance one's love and compassion:

- Giving our happiness to others enhances and strengthens our love for others.

- The practice of taking on the suffering of others develops, enhances and strengthens our compassion.

Having developed well one's love and compassion for others and through the visualisation of giving one's happiness to others and taking on their sufferings, only then is generating whole-hearted resolve possible. It is with this whole-hearted resolve that we can talk about the result, generating bodhicitta, the mind of enlightenment.

CULTIVATING PURE VISION

Verse 15

When I am reborn into an impure land, it is the weapon of my own
evil deeds turned upon me for always cultivating impure vision.
From now on, I shall cultivate only pure vision.

“Impure land” refers to the samsaric environment of cyclic existence where we live and spend our lives. In such an environment, it doesn't matter who we make friends or interact with, every single relationship is only a cause of problems and, in reality, is just suffering. Whatever we see is also a cause for problems and sufferings.

Regarding the formation of such an “impure land,” does it exist from its own side? If we think about it, actually, it does not exist from its own side. It is but the result and a projection of our own distorted or mistaken mind. Due to our distorted mind, we accumulate contaminated karma and due to the force of that, we have this view of the samsaric environment or impure world. So it does not come into existence from its own side.

In previous lessons, we saw how the heroes, the bodhisattva superiors, purposely take rebirth in cyclic existence to benefit sentient beings. For us, everything in cyclic existence is a cause of suffering. I don't think that that is the case for the bodhisattva superiors because their experience is radically different. Whatever they see or experience in samsara does not cause them suffering or problems. Whatever we see and whatever is presented in samsara—full of its distortions and problems—are causes of suffering. These heroes, the bodhisattvas, in particular the bodhisattva superiors, may be in the same physical world, the samsaric environment, as us but what they experience is radically different from ours.

Why is there such a big difference? The difference lies in the fact that the bodhisattva superiors only have the thought of cherishing others while we only have the self-cherishing thought. Even though we are in the same world, their experiences are therefore radically different. The difference lies in having or not having self-cherishing. It also shows that the world we know is not self-established. It does not exist on its own accord and from its own side.

The reason why we are born in an impure land and experience impure appearances is because we have always cultivated impure vision. Therefore, henceforth, we make an oath and pledge to cultivate only pure vision.

What are the ways in which we can cultivate pure vision? The teachings give an example such as when we meet with a person who harms us. We can use that experience of being harmed as a means to exhaust our negativities. We can think, “This person who is here to exhaust my negativities is a manifestation of the buddhas or bodhisattvas. She is appearing in this aspect to help exhaust my negativities.” If we can really think that the person who is harming us is a manifestation of the buddhas and bodhisattvas, appearing for the sole purpose of purifying and exhausting our negativities, this will make the difficult experience more bearable.

Likewise, we can do the same when we encounter people who ask us for money, beg from us or who are always asking us for this and that. If we can think of that person as a manifestation of the buddhas or bodhisattvas, appearing in that aspect to help us overcome our miserliness and finish our accumulation of merit, then we won’t feel so disturbed.

Whatever big or small problem or difficulty we experience in life is the result of our own negative karma. Even the existence of a harm-doer harming us is a result of our own negative karma. Nobody else is responsible, just ourselves. Whether we see that person as a buddha or bodhisattva who is helping us to exhaust our negative karma, or even if we were to look at that person as just someone ordinary who is helping us exhaust our negative karma, the fact remains that that person is exhausting our negative karma! That is what the gurus, meditational deities and buddhas are supposed to do for us as well. So if we think about it, whether it is the guru, the buddha, the deity or the harm-giver, in that respect, they are same as their job is just to exhaust our negative karma.

Khen Rinpoche: It is said that when you go to Wu Tai Shan¹ for the first time, the first person you see there is the manifestation of Manjushri. When you go there for the first time, whether you see some beggar bothering you, a worker or a driver, that person could be a manifestation of Manjushri!

From the very beginning, your mind-set should be that the first person you see must be a manifestation of Manjushri. Then you have a different respect for whatever this person does. It is the same idea.

At that time (when I was at Wu Tai Shan), I saw a man. I thought he was Manjushri. After that, I didn’t see him anymore. There are many stories like this. The reality is that he could be Manjushri or maybe he was not Manjushri. It doesn’t matter. But it really helps your mind when you have such a mind-set.

Here, it is the same thing. The person harming you could be the manifestation of Manjushri, the buddhas or the gurus. When you think that way, then there is less problem in your mind. You don’t become so angry or upset. This is how your mind and your thinking can work in a different way.

Our usual attitude is that when we are harmed, we consider ourselves to be the poor victim and the harm-doer is the aggressor. We always think, “That person is

¹ One of the four holy mountains in China, said to be the abode of Manjushri.

completely at fault. It has nothing to do with me. I'm the victim and that person is the harm-doer." We hold on to the view that the other party is the harm-doer. Psychologically, what will happen then? Won't we get very upset?

As long as we hold on very strongly to the view, "That person is a harm-doer!" then we will definitely get upset. We are not at peace with ourselves. Not only are we upset but the mind is so disturbed. This is so meaningless. There is no benefit. So it is really a problem.

On top of that, we give ourselves even more problems because we continually get upset. So we accumulate negativities. As such, the verse says, "From now on, I shall cultivate only pure vision." We should make this promise to ourselves.

We will find countless advice in the teachings, telling us that we should not focus on the faults of others but rather, concentrate on their qualities. We also find statements encouraging us to regard all sentient beings as the Buddha. Their import and meaning is the same.

CAUSING DISHARMONY AMONG OTHERS

Verse 16

When I am separated from helpful and loving friends, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for luring away others' companions. From now on I shall not separate others from their companions.

What should we think when we experience separation from people that we feel emotionally very close to or those who have been very helpful to us? Such things happen quite often in life. When it happens, we feel very hurt, we feel a sense of great loss and we are disturbed by the experience. What should we do then?

When such things happen to us in life, it is very useful to think of the practices of the person of small capacity, such as the meditation on impermanence. Thinking of impermanence, we recall how everything is in the nature of change and that there is no real stability in life. Thinking of these points would be very helpful for the mind.

But just having the intellectual knowledge and understanding of impermanence or even being able to explain how things are in the nature of change are useless on their own. They are not helpful when the problems come. Mere intellectual knowledge and understanding are not enough. Without the experience that comes from continual reflection, we cannot expect ourselves to feel comforted by the word "impermanence" when problems come. It is only on the basis of having *continually* thought about impermanence and having some real feeling in the heart that it is helpful when problems come. Because of having had that experience already, we remember that experience and recreate that experience and understanding. As such, it is extremely important to meditate consistently and continually on impermanence.

Then when we experience, say, separation from helpful and loving friends, we can remind ourselves that we are experiencing the ripening results of similar actions we

had done in the past. At some point in the past, we had lured away the companions of others, we caused others to be separated from their companions or we caused a split or division between people.

Since those unpleasant experiences are the results of our own negative karma, from now on, we promise ourselves that we will not repeat such actions. We will not cause others to be separated from their companions and loved ones. We will not lure away people from the ones they love, making them love us instead. Essentially, it is not to cause disharmony between people who were harmonious.

DISPLEASED THE HOLY ONES

Verse 17

When all the holy ones are displeased with me, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for casting them aside and resorting to bad companions. From now on I shall renounce bad companions.

“The holy ones” could be our own gurus or those extraordinary beings who are different and special. When these holy beings are displeased or upset, then one becomes very upset and one’s mind is disturbed.

Let’s say that you may be very devoted, respectful and have a lot of faith in a special being or your teacher. But somehow that virtuous friend or guru does not reciprocate and remains unhappy and displeased no matter what you do. When that happens, generally, for most people, their minds become very disturbed. Some may even get upset, generate wrong views and become very negative.

When this happens, the teachings say that the solution is not to point the finger at the holy being but to point it at ourselves. We have to take responsibility, as this is the weapon of our own evil deeds turning upon us. In the past, even when we met with real virtuous friends or holy beings, we did not follow their advice but instead, relied on bad companions. In this context, “bad companions” are those who only work for and are concerned about their own happiness, and who act in ways that are opposite to the Dharma.

When something like this happens to us, from our side, we feel that we have been respectful and devoted. How come the holy being is still unhappy, upset and displeased with us? When we experience this, we become unhappy. We cannot take it. We don’t like it. But in the first place, why do we feel unhappy when the holy being is displeased with us? The answer is the same. It is our own self-cherishing. The problem does not lie with the holy being.

This is something that everybody has experienced and will experience. It cannot be the case that the virtuous friend or holy being is forever smiling at us. Then when he doesn’t smile at us, we think that something is wrong. But the problem doesn’t lie with the virtuous friend. He cannot be smiling all the time. But we don’t like it when he doesn’t smile. We become unhappy when we think that he is unhappy with us. The problem is our own self-cherishing.

In essence, the advice is always about looking inward, not pointing the finger outside. It is always about, “What did I do? What is my role in this?”

Verse 18

When others sin against me by exaggeration or deprecation, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for reviling the holy ones. From now on I shall not revile others by exaggeration or deprecation.

Verse 19

When my material necessities waste away, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for scorning others’ necessities. From now on I shall provide for others’ necessities.

Verse 20

When my mind is unclear and my heart is sad, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for causing others to sin. From now on I shall renounce contributing to others’ sinning.

Sometimes we may feel sad for no apparent reason or we feel that our minds are just very unclear. When we meditate, there is nothing, just pitch darkness and foggy. We think that this is due to spirit harm or some non-humans disturbing us.

Here, the verse is saying that this is not due to spirit harm. The answer is that in the past, we did not cultivate virtue. Rather, we were always engaging in non-virtue. This is the weapon of our own negative karma returning to haunt us. We proclaim ourselves to be practitioners, in particular, practitioners of the Mahayana Dharma, yet in our daily behaviour, we do not conduct ourselves well physically and we use harsh words that put others off, causing them to create negativities.

As such, we now make a promise to train and practise not to become a condition for others to sin.

We should reflect on this. We should look at ourselves with regard to these points. Are we carrying ourselves well? When we speak, will our words upset others? Often, other people are upset or disappointed when they see our behaviour. They think, “Buddhists are like that?” or “These so-called Mahayana practitioners are like that!” Based on what others see of our actions, they may get a bad impression of us as practitioners who follow the Mahayana tradition. So we have to be careful and check whether we are contributing to others creating negative karma in this way.

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Now we will look at some of the qualms that some of you have raised from the previous module.

*Question 1:* Among the nine defilements, the number one to four defilements (the first three are the dormant forms of the three poisons and the fourth is the strong arousal of those three) are those that accumulate fresh projecting karma, and those



who abandon the Path of Seeing abandonments do not accumulate fresh projecting karma, are the defilements number one to four actually the same as the Path of Seeing abandonments?

*Question 2:* Since the superiors who have abandoned the intellectually acquired apprehension of true existence do not accumulate fresh projecting karma, does that mean that the intellectually acquired afflictions are the cause for accumulating projecting karma while the innate afflictions actualise those projecting karma?

*Answers:* These are the two questions as I understand them:

- The first question: Are the first four of the nine defilements mentioned in the *Tathagata Essence* the path of seeing abandonments?
- The second question: Does the intellectually acquired apprehension of true existence motivate the accumulation of projecting karma? Do the innate afflictions nourish the karmic seeds?

What motivate the accumulation of projecting karma are the innate afflictions, not the intellectually acquired afflictions. The ignorance that pertains to the twelve links of dependent origination is posited as an innate affliction. As such, what motivates the accumulation of projecting karma for cyclic existence has to be the innate afflictions, not the intellectually acquired afflictions.

It is true that when one achieves the path of seeing, the intellectually acquired afflictions are abandoned and one does not accumulate fresh projecting karma. But this is not the result of having abandoned the intellectually acquired afflictions. When one achieves the path of seeing, one will not accumulate fresh projecting karma because one has seen the truth directly, i.e., one has realised selflessness directly. Because of that direct realisation of selflessness, that wisdom can harm ignorance. Henceforth, ignorance is weakened to the point that it cannot motivate the fresh accumulation of projecting karma.

So it is not the case that the intellectually acquired afflictions motivate the accumulation of fresh projecting karma and that the innate afflictions only nourish the karmic seeds. What motivate the accumulation of projecting karma are the innate afflictions.

You cannot establish that the first four defilements are necessarily the path of seeing abandonments. Why? Because they are the innate forms of the first four defilements. As such, if it is any of the first four defilements, they are not necessarily path of seeing abandonments because the path of seeing abandonments are the intellectually acquired afflictions. As such, the first four defilements are not necessarily path of seeing abandonments.

*Khen Rinpoche: Think about it. There are many questions and I can't finish everything. Maybe from time to time, I shall read them when I think you are bored. I will put aside five to ten minutes to answer these questions.*

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