

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

Root verses: Excerpt from *Peacock in the Poison Grove: Two Buddhist Texts on Training the Mind*, translation Geshe Lhundub Sopa with Michael Sweet and Leonard Zwilling. © Wisdom Publications with permission granted for use in the FPMT Basic Program by Wisdom Publications.

Lesson 12

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Q & A & Discussion: Inferential cognition transforming into a direct perception. The root text: Verses 31—33. Verse 31: Disparaging karma and its effects. Verse 32: Turning to the dark quarter for help. Verse 33: Not believing in buddhahood.

INFERENCEAL COGNITION TRANSFORMING INTO A DIRECT PERCEPTION

Question: For sentient beings, is it possible for a mind that realises emptiness through a mental image to be transformed into a mind that realises emptiness directly? The reason I am asking this question is because I was unable to find the answer as to how the transition into the wisdom directly realising emptiness takes place.

Is it the case for sentient beings that the conceptual mind that realises emptiness through a mental image has to stop functioning temporarily so as to allow the wisdom that directly realises emptiness to arise?

Answer: There are ordinary beings who realise emptiness but ordinary beings do not realise emptiness directly. If you remember the discussion on the different kinds of awareness or consciousness, there are wrong consciousness and doubt.

Doubt itself is divided into three:

1. Doubt tending to the non-factual
2. Equal doubt
3. Doubt tending towards the factual

After that, there are the correctly assuming consciousness, the inferential cogniser and the direct perceiver.

Khen Rinpoche: Do you remember or have you forgotten all of this? We have gone through all this in class.

Initially, one may have a wrong (or perverse) consciousness with regard to the ultimate nature of reality. One may actually deny the existence of emptiness, thinking that there is no such thing.

Let's say, one hears teachings on emptiness. Then one's strong belief in the non-existence of emptiness breaks down a little and is weakened. But one still has doubts after hearing the teachings. One may still wonder but that mind is not as strong as a wrong consciousness.

- Then one proceeds from a doubt tending towards the non-factual to equal doubt and one may be a little bit more open, "Maybe yes, maybe not. I am not sure."
- Then by hearing more teachings and reflection, perhaps, one then sides more with the possibility of emptiness though one remains undecided, "Maybe it is true after all. Maybe things don't exist inherently."
- Then by hearing more teachings and more reflection, one may come to a point when one believes strongly, "It has to be like that! It cannot be anything else." It is a very strong belief but not an ascertainment yet.

Then the time comes when one understands and realises emptiness via a correct reason. It has to be a correct reason. In dependence upon a correct reason or reasons, one comes to realise the object, in this case, emptiness. That mind is called an inferential cogniser realising emptiness and it is a conceptual mind.

After one has that inferential cognition of emptiness through a correct reason or reasons, one has to familiarise oneself over and over again with that understanding. It is said that the time will come when that understanding or realisation is transformed into a direct perception.

On the path of accumulation and the path of preparation, that individual primarily meditates on emptiness, but that meditation always involves the meaning generality of emptiness. That realisation is a realisation of emptiness via a meaning generality.

Essentially, if you think about the question that was just asked—"How do we explain the transformation of a doubt with regard to emptiness into a correct belief"—can there be such a transformation in the first place? Likewise, how do you progress from correct belief to an inferential cognition? With regard to the inferential cognition of emptiness, can the entity of that mind transform into a direct perception? If you were to really think about these points, they are very difficult to understand.

From the sutric point of view, essentially, with regard to the mind that goes on to enlightenment, there is no option other than asserting that the conceptual mind can transform in entity into a direct perceiver.

But if you were to explain it from the tantric point of view, then it is a little bit easier. We start from the mind that moves from life to life. It is the extremely subtle mind that moves at the time of death to the next life and it is the extremely subtle mind that moves on to enlightenment. All the coarser levels of consciousnesses cease to exist before enlightenment can happen.

When you look at this from the sutric point of view, you have no choice but to say that through familiarisation over a period of time, the conceptual mind realising emptiness *can* be transformed in entity into the direct perception of emptiness. Isn't that the case? Don't we end up having to saying that? There is no other option. First,

before we start the debate, we have no choice but to say this.

Khen Rinpoche: What do you think?

Student 1: We were taught that there is a wisdom that arises from hearing. This moves on to a wisdom that arises from reflection and the wisdom that realises emptiness directly. I have this premise that the inferential realisation of emptiness and the direct realisation of emptiness are two different minds.

When we talk about the transition, it seems that the conceptual mind that realises emptiness through a mental image or a meaning generality has to be transformed into a direct perception. On the one hand, it seems there is one entity by means of transformation and on the other hand, it seems that there are two different minds—an inferential cognition and the direct perception of emptiness.

Khen Rinpoche: An inferential cognition of emptiness and the direct perception of emptiness are necessarily different because they are different minds. One is thought; the other is a direct perceiver. There is nothing difficult about this point. They are necessarily different minds. It is clear that one is thought and one is direct perceiver. That is easy but that is not your question. Your question is: Does that inferential cognition of emptiness transform in entity into a direct perceiver?

The main question is about the mind realising emptiness in the continuum of a person on the path of preparation. The mind realising emptiness in the continuum of a person on the path of preparation is necessarily conceptual.

Then the time comes when with repeated familiarisation, it is said that that person will see emptiness directly and he enters the path of seeing.

The basic question then is this: Does the inferential cognition of emptiness in the continuum of a person on the path of preparation transform in entity into the direct perception of emptiness when he enters the path of seeing?

If you were to say no, then you have only one other option, that is, in order to achieve the path of seeing, you have to generate a completely different mind—the mind that realises emptiness directly. These are the only two options.

I guess the better option would be the first one. You probably would have to say that the inferential cognition realising emptiness transforms into a direct perceiver.

What other option is there? If you were to say that the inferential cognition of emptiness does *not* transform into a direct perceiver upon entering the path of seeing, then you would have to say that the mind directly perceiving emptiness is a newly arisen phenomenon. If it is newly arisen, what is its prior moment?

If you say that it is a new mind, then you have to account for its immediate prior moment before it arises as a direct perceiver. The immediate prior moment is essentially a mind in the continuum of a person on the path of preparation. That mind, which is the substantial cause, moves on to become a direct perceiver. Does

that mind realise emptiness?

If you say that the wisdom realising emptiness upon entering the path of seeing is a new mind, what is its former moment? Is its former moment a mind that realises emptiness? If you say yes, is that former moment of mind that realises emptiness a direct perceiver?

But if you take the first position—that the inferential cognition realising emptiness in the continuum of a person on the path of preparation transforms into the direct perception of emptiness upon achieving the path of seeing—this position has less complications.

Khen Rinpoche: Don't you think so? Shall I make it more complicated? Which one are you going to choose? I think that there are only these two options.

- You can either say that the inferential cognition realising emptiness that is essentially a conceptuality or thought ceases at the time of achieving the path of seeing or it doesn't cease.
- If it doesn't cease, then it will carry on to the path of seeing and the path of meditation. Those realisations of emptiness are conceptual, are all thoughts.

If the inferential cognition realising emptiness in the continuum of a person on the path of preparation does *not* transform into a direct perceiver upon achieving the path of seeing, that means it will continue as a thought (or conceptual mind) and that conceptual mind will continue on the path of seeing all the way up to the end of the path of meditation.

Then even the mind that realises emptiness in the last moment as a sentient being would be a conceptual thought. Then what moves on to enlightenment? Does the continuum of a similar type move on to enlightenment?

Does the continuum of this conceptual thought realising emptiness in the continuum of the person who is in his last moment as a sentient being move on to enlightenment?

You have to account for all these questions.

There are more questions: Is the inferential cognition realising emptiness in the continuum of a person on the path of preparation a buddha lineage or not?

That is the thing with these great treatises. If you don't think about them in depth, that's it. But if you do think more deeply, there is so much to think about and sometimes you end up with many unanswered qualms. Having many qualms even though they may be unanswered is not a bad thing at all. In fact, it is a very good thing. It is absolutely not good to not have any qualms. If you are a buddha, you don't need these qualms as you won't have qualms. Otherwise, you need qualms.

The essence of the answer is that the inferential cogniser realising emptiness in the continuum of a person on the path of preparation transforms in entity into a direct perceiver when he realises emptiness directly.

What difficulty do you have if you take this to be the answer? Is there anything you are not happy about?

Khen Rinpoche (addressing Student 2 as he comes up to pose his question): You must understand the last question. The question now is: Do you find any difficulty in accepting the essential answer?

Student 2: I have a qualm regarding this. I think I would have to say it is transformed. But I have a difficulty. If it is transformed, what happens to the meaning generality when it becomes a direct realisation? Does that meaning generality, the mental image, become a phenomenon source form?

Khen Rinpoche: What do you find so difficult?

Student 2: What happens to the mental image if it is transformed?

Khen Rinpoche: The mental image disappears!

Student 2: I thought I heard in *lorig* that it becomes a phenomenon source form or something like that?

Khen Rinpoche: There can only be a meaning generality if a thought is involved. If conceptuality does not exist, then there is no meaning generality to talk of.

Student 2: Then what is a phenomenon source form?

Khen Rinpoche: Is that related to this discussion?

Are you finding any difficulty in accepting that an inferential cognition realising emptiness *transforms* into a direct perceiver? What is bothering you about this?

Student 1 (who posed the original question): If it is a consciousness, it is necessarily a product. We understand consciousness in terms of a continuum, i.e., it comes from the continuum of a similar type.

Let's say, we talk about the first moment of the direct realisation of emptiness. We take that to be a newly created phenomenon. What is the substantial cause of that wisdom that directly realises emptiness? Must it be a conceptual realisation of emptiness that is a different mind?

Khen Rinpoche: They are definitely different minds.

(Student's response is inaudible).

Ven Gyurme: What you are trying to say basically is that a thought cannot become a direct perceiver because there is no continuum of a similar type. That means you didn't accept the answer right from the beginning.

(Student's response is inaudible).

Khen Rinpoche: There is a continuity of similarity. In fact, the most important similarity is that they both realise emptiness.

(Student's response is inaudible).

Khen Rinpoche: (Addressing the class) Do you have any qualms about this explanation? Are you thinking or do you want to think? If you don't want to think, then we will just stop here and continue with the text.

Question: I am always confused with this line in the *Heart Sutra*, which I think is related to our discussion: "There is no eye element and so on up to and including no mind element and no mental consciousness element." What is a mental consciousness element and how is it related to the direct perception of emptiness? If we understand what a mental consciousness element is, will it help us to understand this mind that is able to transform?

Answer: When consciousness is divided into two, there are sense consciousnesses and the mental consciousness. The mental consciousness primarily refers to the mental main mind.

The "mind element" would probably refer to the mental consciousness, i.e., the main mind, whereas the "mental consciousness element" would include both the main mind and the mental factors.

Khen Rinpoche: I don't remember exactly. It could be like that. I am not sure.

Student 4: I refer to the qualm with regard to the inferential cogniser that transforms into a direct perceiver. Based on that logic, if we work backwards, we would have to say that a correctly assuming consciousness will be transformed into an inferential cognizer. And if we go back again, we will end up having to say that ignorance ultimately transforms into wisdom. The object may be different but I think that is where one of the qualms will end up.

Khen Rinpoche: That question will arise if you posit that the inferential cognition realising emptiness can transform in entity into a direct perception of emptiness.

If you work that argument backwards, is the inferential cognition of emptiness the same continuum as the correct belief focussing on emptiness? Then is that correct belief a continuation essentially of doubt and this doubt is essentially a continuation of wrong consciousness?

If you think about it, can you argue that through listening and thinking about things, a wrong consciousness in general becomes a doubt? Maybe you can argue in that way.

Let's say you have a wrong (or perverse) consciousness that decisively thinks that there is no such thing as a buddha, that there is no such thing as karma.

Then somehow by thinking about these points and based on some reason, you

change your view and think, “Maybe, there is actually karma after all.” Is that doubt a continuation of the wrong consciousness from before? If you think about it, you may have to say that it is a continuation. Otherwise, what option do you have? If you say that wrong consciousness can transform in entity into doubt or something else, what problems will there be?

Khen Rinpoche: Are there any problems? Or are there no problems?

That is why in the *Tathagata Essence*, there was a question about whether the emptiness of the apprehension of true existence is buddha lineage or not. If you accept what has been said so far, i.e., it can transform, then you would probably have to end up saying that it is buddha lineage. It follows then that ignorance is buddha lineage!

Can't a wrong consciousness ever change into something better? Can it become something like doubt that is much better than wrong view? It is not possible that a wrong consciousness is always a wrong consciousness. It either changes into something else or it disappears.

Can a wrong consciousness transform in entity, for instance, can a wrong consciousness become a doubting consciousness? Yes or no?

Students: Yes!

Khen Rinpoche: If you say yes, that means there is the continuation of the apprehension of true existence all the way to enlightenment. Is the apprehension of true existence buddha lineage? If wrong consciousness can transform in entity into doubting consciousness, wouldn't that make ignorance buddha lineage?

You have to stand for what you believe in. You cannot take one position one minute and the next minute take another position!

Khen Rinpoche: Is your brain functioning? Last time, you used to say, “No pervasion!”

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## **DISPARAGING KARMA AND ITS EFFECTS**

Verse 31

When things get worse no matter what I do, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for disparaging moral causality and dependent origination. From now on I shall strive to accumulate merit.

“When things get worse no matter what I do” could be in terms of one's practice. One's practice doesn't succeed or it seems to be getting worse. It could also refer to one's career or business. So no matter what one does, one is not successful. Not only that, but things actually become worse. It is said that it is the weapon of our own evil deeds turned upon us for disparaging karma and its effect. It is the ripening effect of

the non-virtue that we accumulated in the past because of not believing in karma and its effects and not being careful with living our lives according to the principles of karma.

The solution therefore is to “strive to accumulate merit.” There are other editions that say, “From now on I shall strive to be patient.”

Essentially, whatever happens, the solution is not to disparage karma and to strive to live our lives according to the principles of karma and its effects. When we live our lives in this way, there will be challenges and at times, it is not easy. But even if we face difficulties in trying to keep to our principles and our beliefs in karma, we would just have to bear and put up with them.

### **TURNING TO THE DARK QUARTER FOR HELP**

Verse 32

When all the religious rites I perform go awry, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for looking to the dark quarter for help. From now on I shall turn away from the dark quarter.

There are people who resort to pujas or religious rites when things go wrong or they meet with obstacles or sicknesses. Sometimes, even after the pujas have been performed, their situations do not improve and may even get worse. At such times, it is highly possible to develop wrong views thinking that all these pujas are invalid and do not work.

This is not true. It all depends on whether the person who is arranging for the pujas to be done has faith in the Dharma and the understanding of what Dharma is. If one has faith in the Dharma, it doesn't matter what the result of the pujas is. Even if the pujas don't seem to be helpful in a particular situation, because of having faith in and an understanding of the Dharma, one knows that once the cause has been created, it is only a matter of time that its result will happen. Even if that doesn't happen now, it would definitely ripen in the future.

But there are times when despite pujas being done, things may get even worse. What is the cause of that scenario? It is because the force of the non-virtue that is behind the bad experiences is stronger. Therefore, it is ripening now. That makes it look as if the pujas are useless or ineffective.

There are people who sponsor pujas but instead of the problem going away, the problem gets bigger. Then they think, “The pujas are making even more problems for me.” They blame the pujas and the rites, thinking that it is the pujas that are causing more problems to arise. But actually that is not the case. Because the strength of the non-virtue is so powerful, it is ripening in the form of more and more problems.

“Looking to the dark quarter for help” means that in the past, we listen to people whose advice are basically non-Dharma. We have also done things that are completely opposite to the Dharma.

So if we do not desire such an outcome, the solution is that from now on, we should



turn away from the dark quarter or the dark side, which means not engaging in non-Dharma. We should do things according to the Dharma.

### NOT BELIEVING IN BUDDHAHOOD

Verse 33

When my prayers to the Three Jewels go unanswered, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for not believing in buddhahood. From now on I shall rely on the Three Jewels alone.

Many people who are solely concerned with the happiness of this life alone would make prayers to the Three Jewels to overcome some sickness, spirit harms or failures in their career or businesses. They want to be free from such problems. At times, their prayers don't succeed. At those times, it is quite normal for such people to think, "I made such strong prayers but nothing happened. What is the use? The Three Jewels have no power!" It is really possible to have such wrong views.

Question from Khen Rinpoche: From the Buddha's side, does the Buddha have the complete power to fulfil all your aims of this life? Does the Buddha have the power to grant you whatever you like for the happiness of this life?

*Khen Rinpoche: Some say yes. Some say no. It is a simple question.*

Does the Buddha have the power to free you from your sickness? Does the Buddha have the power to solve your business problems?

*Khen Rinpoche: Does or doesn't he have the power?*

(Students' responses are inaudible).

Khen Rinpoche: Does Tua Pek Kong<sup>1</sup> have power or not?

*Student 1:* I recall very clearly in one teaching that Lama Zopa Rinpoche mentioned that the power of the Buddha's enlightened activities is 50% and the power of sentient beings' karma is 50%.

*Khen Rinpoche: Why do you have doubt? What is so difficult about this? If you think yes, just say yes. If you think no, just say no.*

What is so difficult about this? The Buddha can bring you to enlightenment. The Buddha can free sentient beings from samsara. And he cannot do this one small little thing?

The Buddha has the power to save you, protect you from the sufferings of cyclic existence in general and also the sufferings of the lower realms. That is the reason why you take refuge in him, isn't it?

Do you all have an experience similar to what is mentioned in the verse? Otherwise

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<sup>1</sup> A worldly god popular with people in this part of the world.

there is no reason for doubt to arise.

It happens that sometimes our prayers to the Three Jewels concerning the affairs of this life may not materialise. When that happens, it is important to avoid generating the wrong view thinking, “The Buddha is useless! He can’t help me.” The explanation for our prayers not materialising is that, in the past, we did not have real conviction or single-pointed trust in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Or it could be that in a past life or even in this life, we don’t really believe in what the Buddha said. That is, we don’t have much trust and belief in the Buddha’s words.

It is said that no matter what happens to us in our lives, whether good or bad, we should completely entrust ourselves to the Three Jewels. If you look at what refuge is, it is a mind, the faith of conviction in the Three Jewels’ ability to protect us from the lower realms and from samsara. In order to generate the mind of refuge there must be the two causes, one of which is the faith of conviction in their ability to protect us from whatever suffering we are afraid of.

This faith of conviction in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha’s ability to protect us from the sufferings of samsara and the lower realms is extremely important. It is not easy. Even if you have thought about, it is really not so straightforward. It is said, “If you believe and have the faith of conviction in the power and ability of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha to protect you from all the sufferings—the sufferings of samsara and the suffering of the lower realms—you will definitely be protected.” The question then arises. *How* are you protected?

You have to think about this. Don’t you think this is so important? This is crucial for us for what will save us from the lower realms is supposedly this trust and faith in the Buddha’s power and ability to protect you from the lower realms. This is what is mentioned in the teachings—if you have complete trust in the Buddha, i.e., you are convinced that he can protect you, it is guaranteed that you will not go to the lower realms. It is said with so much confidence in the teachings that *definitely* you will not fall to the lower realms. The question is how does this work? Don’t you think that it is such an important thing to think about?

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