

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 14

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The root text: Verses 40—48. Verse 40: Internalising a pernicious view Verse 41: Concentrating on one's aggrandisement. Verse 42: Shamelessly flitting from friend to friend. Verse 43: Increasing one's selfishness, pride and greed. Verse 44: Not considering one's own devilish faults. Verse 45: Repaying kindness with ingratitude. Verse 46: A smith killed by his own sword. Verse 47: A fletcher killed by his own arrow. Verse 48: Parents killed by their cherished son. Qualms from the *Tathagata Essence*.

INTERNALISING A PERNICIOUS VIEW

Verse 40

When none of my practices reach their goal, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for internalizing a pernicious view. From now on, whatever I do shall be solely for the sake of others.

In the course of one's practice, doing retreat and so forth, if one doesn't fulfil the purpose of that practice, then what is the cause of such an experience? It is said that such an experience is the result of having followed a pernicious or harmful view. This "pernicious view" refers to cherishing oneself and forsaking others.

The teachings tell us that if we want our practices to fulfil a certain goal, what we need to do is to perform the practice only for the sake of others with the thought of benefiting them and not oneself.

CONCENTRATING ON ONE'S OWN AGGRANDISEMENT

Verse 41

When I cannot control my own mind even though I engage in religious activity, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for concentrating on my own aggrandizement in the present life. From now on I shall concentrate on the desire for liberation.

The main purpose of engaging in virtue with our body and speech is to subdue and discipline our mind. If we find that our mind is not improving but instead may even be getting worse despite doing prostrations, making offerings and so forth, then what is the cause of this?

When we are unable to discipline our mind even though we may engage in virtue, this is the result of focusing on the happiness of this life, to gain respect, reputation and so forth. In short, it is motivated by one of the eight worldly dharmas.

The solution is that whenever we engage in virtue such as making prostrations and offerings, doing recitations and so forth, it is important to make sure that it is not mixed with and contaminated by the eight worldly dharmas. Rather, whatever virtue we may engage in including making prostrations and offerings, doing recitations and so forth, we should think that these practices are done for the sake of subduing our mind, reducing our afflictions and in order to achieve liberation.

Therefore, it is emphasised in the teachings that whenever we engage in any activity, in particular the practice of virtue, we must examine and adjust our motivation, i.e., we should have the correct motivation for doing the practice. That is very important. Otherwise, even though we may think we are engaging in virtue and doing something very virtuous, such as making many prostrations, reciting many OM MANI PADME HUMS and so forth, if we don't examine and adjust our motivation accordingly, those practices may not contribute to the pacification or disciplining of our mind. Whatever practice we do, we should least adjust our motivation by wishing that the practice becomes a cause for subduing our mind.

SHAMELESSLY FLITTING FROM FRIEND TO FRIEND

Verse 42

When I despair as soon as I've sat down and reflected, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for shamelessly flitting about from one new friend of high status to another. From now on I shall be serious about my friendships with everyone.

The example cited in the commentary is this: There could be times when one may actually stay in retreat for a certain period of time, even months. But towards the end, when one looks back at one's retreat, one may feel, "Nothing much has happened in this retreat. I didn't really do a good job." One may even think, "I have wasted my time. If I had known this earlier, I would not have done this retreat." One feels regret.

This can happen to us in various aspects of our lives. We undertake a certain activity, but after a while, when we look back at what we have done, we regret having started it in the first place. This is said to be the result of having "shamelessly flitting about from one new friend of high status to another" in the past.

Such a situation also applies to running after gurus. One may see some good points in a prospective guru and get very excited. Then one forms a relationship with this guru receiving some instructions from him. But after a while, maybe one or two months later, one gets bored and thinks, "He is not so good after all."

Then when one sees another person, one thinks that this person may be a better guru. One then runs to this person seeing him as the guru and forsakes the earlier guru. Then the same thing repeats itself. After a while, one moves on again to the next guru and the next one and so forth.

In this text, “shamelessly flitting about from one new friend” is connected with “of high status to another” but in the Tibetan edition, these two parts can be read separately.

The second part—“of high status”—has to do with not practising the Dharma according to one’s level. When we engage in Dharma practice, we are supposed to be subduing our mind. We have to know where our level is and train accordingly. We have to train the mind gradually, starting from the path of the person of small capacity because that is one’s level. But instead of doing that, we look for the high practices. We want to do the Mahayana practices right away, followed by the practices of secret mantra, running after practices that are not at our level.

The solution is that henceforth, before taking somebody as your guru, you have to check carefully. Once you have made the decision to take that person as your guru, make sure you rely properly on the guru to the very end. It is same with making friends. Before you make friends, you should check carefully. With regard to practice, you have to practise according to your own level and not run after high practices that are beyond your current level of ability.

When it comes to listening to the teachings, learning and studying the Dharma, we must study as extensively as possible. In fact, it would be good if you can study everything such as sutra and tantra and all their different aspects. When comes to study, we have to know everything.

But when it comes to training the mind and practising, you have to do it in a proper order, without jumping ahead, i.e., you cannot start right away with the high-level practices. You have to start from the beginning in accordance with your level of mind.

The practices of the three types of persons—the persons of small, medium and great capacities—are the practices for one person to achieve enlightenment. This is what is said. As such, first, we have to train our mind in the practices of a person of small capacity and actualise those practices before we move on to train our mind in the practices of the person of medium capacity. Once we are trained in and actualise those practices, only then do we move on to the practices of a person of great capacity. When it comes to training the mind, there is no such thing as jumping ahead to the advanced practices.

INCREASING ONE’S SELFISHNESS, PRIDE AND GREED

Verse 43

When I am deceived by others’ cunning, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for increasing my selfishness, pride, and insatiable greed. From now on I shall markedly reduce all of them.

Sometimes in life, we do meet people who take advantage of us. They succeed in cheating us because of their deceit and guile. Sometimes we think we are smart and will never be cheated and that no one can take advantage of us but nevertheless it happens to all of us.

When we are deceived and taken advantage of, we are disturbed and upset. This is said to be the result of our own pride and insatiable greed, always hankering for the possessions and the wealth of others. Henceforth, we should practise contentment.

Even in this life, when we have pride and desire, it causes us problems but it will also bring us problems in future lives. If we think about this carefully, many of the problems and complications in life and in the family that we have experienced and that occur in the world at large come from a lack of contentment and greed.

For example, let's look at the environmental problems that the world is facing today such as floods, rain not falling at the correct times and so forth. All these environmental problems originate from men's greed. Many of the problems that the human race is facing today are man-made.

The earth has evolved in such a way that it has the natural ability to accommodate all the lives on this planet. Not just humans, but also insects, animals and all the life forms that we can find in the world. But now the human race is facing all kinds of different problems related to survival, the environment and so forth. Most of the problems that the human race faces today originate from men's greed.

We all need to survive and to stay alive. It is our right to pursue the things that will keep us alive. But what about doing things or owning things that are actually not necessary for our survival? We are doing more than what we need to survive. So there is a difference between need and want. That is a completely different question.

If we actually possess more than what we need, are we actually entitled to these possessions? Is it really fair for us to say, "I have the right to do whatever I want. This is my choice!" If we are not content and we follow after greed, life becomes very complicated and we create problems for others and ourselves as well.

NOT CONSIDERING ONE'S OWN DEVILISH FAULTS

Verse 44

When I am side-tracked by attachment or aversion while studying or teaching, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for not considering my own devilish faults. From now on I shall examine these impediments and abandon them.

When practising the Dharma, listening to the Dharma and teaching the Dharma are done under the influence of attachment, jealousy, negative competitiveness and so forth, then all these activities of practising, listening and teaching the Dharma do not become antidotes to the afflictions. Instead, they contribute to one's attachment and hatred.

Isn't this what happens? One may be learning the Dharma for a long time, for years, but somehow the mind hasn't improved. In fact, one may find that one has more afflictions, more anger and more attachment. The same applies when one is teaching and explaining the Dharma. Instead of contributing to the subduing of one's mind, one may become angrier, more attached and more competitive in a negative way.

These experiences are the result of not thinking of or reflecting on our “own devilish faults.” In the context here, the “devilish fault” is our self-cherishing. We have not reflected well on the faults of our self-cherishing. So the solution is to think deeply about the faults of our self-cherishing and then abandon it.

REPAYING KINDNESS WITH INGRATITUDE

Verse 45

When all the good I’ve done turns out badly, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me for repaying kindness with ingratitude .From now on I shall very respectfully repay kindness.

Sometimes, we do things with a good intention but people don’t reciprocate. This is similar to what was mentioned in the *Eight Verses of Thought Transformation*. Despite doing things with a good intention, they are not reciprocated and turn out badly.

This is said to be the result of repaying the kindness of others with ingratitude in the past, such as being ungrateful to those who have been kind to us, for example, our parents. It is also because of harming our friends or people who have helped us.

The advice is that we should repay the kindness of those who have helped us and were kind to us such as serving and taking care of our parents and not harming others. Starting with our parents, we should respect them and take care of them. Likewise, we should do the same for others.

A SMITH KILLED BY HIS OWN SWORD

Verse 46

In short, when calamities befall me, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me, like a smith killed by his own sword. From now on I shall be heedful of my own sinful actions.

It happens to all of us. In life, there are things that we want but don’t get. When we don’t get what we want, we suffer. Also there are many things that we don’t want in life but they just come our way. So not getting what we want and getting everything we don’t want, i.e., when the undesirable befalls us, it is the weapon of “my own evil deeds turned upon me, like a smith killed by his own sword.”

The solution henceforth is to be conscientious and be mindful of our own negative actions.

A FLETCHER KILLED BY HIS OWN ARROW

Verse 47

When I experience suffering in the wretched states of existence, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me, like a fletcher killed by his own arrow. From now on I shall be heedful of my own sinful actions.

The “wretched states of existence” refer to the lower realms. This verse is similar to the preceding verse.

PARENTS KILLED BY THEIR CHERISHED SON

Verse 48

When the sufferings of the householder befall me, it is the weapon of my own evil deeds turned upon me, like parents killed by their cherished son. From now on it is right for me to leave worldly life forever.

“To leave worldly life” means to get ordained.

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In the *Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra*, this line deals with the training in the perfection of wisdom on the path of meditation, “Shariputra, therefore, in emptiness there is no form, no feeling, no discrimination, no compositional factors, no consciousness.” First, the five aggregates are mentioned.

Next are the 12 sources. “No eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind” are the six sense powers that are the empowering conditions for the generation of the five sense consciousnesses and the mental consciousness.

“No visual form, no sound, no odour, no taste, no object of touch and no phenomenon” are the objects of observation of the six consciousnesses—the five sense consciousnesses and the mental consciousness.

“There is no eye element and so on up to and including no mind element and no mental consciousness element.” This sentence encapsulates the 18 elements (or constituents). Of the 18 elements:

- there are the six elements that are the empowering conditions for the generation of consciousness, i.e., both the sense consciousnesses and the mental consciousness. They refer to the six sense powers: the eye sense power, the nose sense power and so forth.
- “... and no mental consciousness element” indicates the six consciousnesses that are dependent on the six sense powers. These are the other six elements.

So the 18 elements are:

(1-12) The six sense powers (five sense and one mental sense power) that are the empowering conditions for the generation of the six consciousnesses. This makes 12 elements.

(13-18) The presentation of the six objects of the six consciousnesses is implied.<sup>1</sup>

This is an answer to an earlier question about the difference between the mind element and mental consciousness element.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pages 4—5, Lesson 8, Second Basic Program, Module 4 on *The Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* and the Six Perfections.

<sup>2</sup> Page 6, Lesson 12.

- The mind element refers to one of the six sense powers, the mental sense power.
- The mental consciousness element refers to the main mind. It also includes the five sense consciousnesses.

### **QUALMS FROM THE TATHAGATA ESSENCE**

*Qualm:* When the defilements are completely eradicated, does the disintegratedness of the defilements still exist? If so, what function does it perform?

*Khen Rinpoche* (addressing the class): Do you have any opinions on the disintegratedness of the defilements?

*Khen Rinpoche:* Does anyone have any answers?

*Student 1:* When the defilements are removed, their disintegratedness still remains. An example is the case of a stream-enterer. He realises emptiness at that point in time and because of that, he doesn't generate any more afflictions that produce new throwing karma. However, he still needs to take rebirth several times because of the disintegratedness of the past karma that he had created. Those are not removed. The defilements are removed but their disintegratedness remains to produce an effect that causes him to take rebirth.

If you have realised emptiness, the strong anger and attachment that produce throwing karma no longer arise. But because of the disintegratedness that he had accumulated before, those continue to produce a rebirth for him. Their effects remain.

In the past, he did produce new afflictions but now, no new afflictions are produced, so there is the disintegratedness that produces the throwing karma.

The disintegratedness of the defilements does exist. After he realised emptiness, it still continues on to produce effects.

*Khen Rinpoche:* That part is OK. It can be accepted. But you are not answering my question.

How far can the disintegratedness of the obscurations go? When one becomes an arhat (a foe destroyer), does the arhat still possess the disintegratedness of the defilements?

Does the defilements still exist at arhathood? Yes or no?

Does the disintegratedness of the path of seeing abandonments exist in the continuum of the person on the path of seeing?

*Student 1:* During the uninterrupted path, the disintegratedness still exists but once he goes into the path of release, the disintegratedness no longer exists.

*Khen Rinpoche:* Does the disintegratedness of the path of seeing abandonments exist in the continuum of the person on the path of seeing?

*Student 1:* No.

*Khen Rinpoche:* Isn't the disintegratedness of the path of seeing abandonments a composite phenomenon, a functioning thing?

*Student 1:* Yes but I read in the text that the defilements and their seeds are removed.

*Khen Rinpoche:* That point is clear. But what we are looking at here is the disintegratedness of the path of seeing abandonments. Does that exist in the continuum of the person on the path of seeing?

*Student 1:* No, it doesn't exist.

*Khen Rinpoche:* Why is that so? Isn't the disintegratedness of the path of seeing abandonments a functioning thing?

*Student 1:* Yes.

*Khen Rinpoche:* If it is a functioning thing, where is it? The disintegratedness of the path of seeing abandonments occurs *after* the path of seeing abandonments have been abandoned or *before* they have been abandoned?

*Student 1:* It should be after.

*Khen Rinpoche:* Then in whose continuum does it exist? Doesn't it exist in the continuum of the person who is on the path of seeing?

*Khen Rinpoche:* Anyone else wants to answer this question?

*Student 2:* The disintegratedness of the afflictions means that the afflictions have to stop to exist. That is why the disintegratedness started in the first place. Therefore, the disintegratedness of the path of seeing abandonments has to come into existence after the path of release.

*Khen Rinpoche:* Basically, did you not just say then that the disintegratedness of the path of seeing abandonments exists in the continuum of that person on the path of seeing?

*Student 2:* There would be a problem if I were to say that.

*Khen Rinpoche:* Are you saying that or not?

*Student 2:* Can I say that the disintegratedness exists for a while then it disappears?

*Khen Rinpoche:* There is no need to explain. Does it exist?

*Student 2:* It exists.

*Khen Rinpoche:* If you say the disintegratedness of the path of seeing abandonments



exists, is this disintegratedness of the path of seeing abandonments a path of seeing abandonment in itself or is it a path of meditation abandonment or is it an obscuration?

*Student 2:* It exists in a superior's mind and it is a path of meditation abandonment.

*Khen Rinpoche:* Is it an afflictive obscuration or a knowledge obscuration?

*Student 2:* I think it is still an afflictive obscuration.

*Khen Rinpoche:* Based on what you have said, we can extend the same conclusion to the disintegratedness of the knowledge obscurations, i.e., the disintegratedness of the knowledge obscurations exist on the buddha ground.

We do have to think about things.

Are you saying that the disintegratedness of the path of seeing abandonments does not exist in the continuum of the person on the path of seeing? It would seem that you would have to say that because of your earlier position. If you reject that, what alternative do you have?

You would have to say that the disintegratedness of the path of seeing abandonments does *not* exist in the continuum of the person on the path of seeing.

Earlier on, if you said yes, then you have some problems. The alternative then is no.

*Khen Rinpoche:* Someone else should take over.

The question is when the defilements are completely eradicated, does the disintegratedness of the defilements still exist? If so, what function does it perform?

*Student 3:* I think it still exists. Disintegratedness means the cessation of something, i.e., something has ceased. That is a functioning thing. That means the cessation of the defilements has happened already. As it is a functioning thing, it has to continue to exist. It cannot just go into non-existence. It has to produce something and go on and on.

*Khen Rinpoche:* If that is the case, then the disintegratedness of the knowledge obscurations should exist on the buddha ground because it is produced. The cessation of the knowledge obscurations is followed in the next moment by the disintegratedness that is left on the buddha ground. That means the Buddha has the disintegratedness of the knowledge obscurations.

*Student 3:* Yes.

*Khen Rinpoche:* It follows then that the disintegratedness of the knowledge obscurations is Buddha and the disintegratedness of the knowledge obscurations is therefore an object of refuge.

*Student 3:* OK ...

*Khen Rinpoche:* Is the disintegratedness of the knowledge obscurations Buddha or not?

*Student 3:* It is the basis of designation of Buddha.

*Khen Rinpoche:* Is it Buddha?

*Student 3:* It has to be Buddha because everything about him is pure.

*Khen Rinpoche:* Then it seems that the knowledge obscurations have moved to the buddha ground.

*Student 3:* Why is that so? The knowledge obscurations and its disintegratedness are different. The disintegratedness of knowledge obscurations comes about because the knowledge obscurations no longer exist. If that is not the case, how then do you posit the disintegratedness of knowledge obscurations?

*Khen Rinpoche:* Is the disintegratedness of knowledge obscurations not a fault of knowledge obscurations? Is it not a continuum?

*Student 3:* Yes. But the cessation of knowledge obscurations only happens after they cease.

*Khen Rinpoche:* When the knowledge obscurations cease, doesn't the continuum of the knowledge obscurations also cease?

*Student 3:* Yes.

*Khen Rinpoche:* So the continuum of the knowledge obscurations doesn't move to enlightenment.

*Student 3:* Yes.

*Khen Rinpoche:* Then the disintegratedness of the knowledge obscurations doesn't go to enlightenment either, right?

*Student 3:* But then there is a fault because that would mean that a functioning thing has ceased to exist.

*Khen Rinpoche:* If the knowledge obscurations do not go to enlightenment, can the disintegratedness of knowledge obscurations go to enlightenment since the disintegratedness of the knowledge obscurations is essentially a continuation of the knowledge obscurations?

*Student 3:* I think it can. If it cannot do so, then it has to change into something else because it is a functioning thing.

*Khen Rinpoche:* Does the disintegratedness of knowledge obscurations go on to enlightenment? Essentially that is the question.

*Student 4:* The question is saying that the defilements are completely ceased?

I take it that the defilements would include both the afflictions and the knowledge obscurations together with their seeds and their predispositions. The defilements would include the manifest obscurations. That means the mind itself, for example, ignorance together with its seeds while one is abandoning the afflictions obscurations. When one is abandoning the knowledge obscurations, this would include the predispositions as well as the appearances. So these two come together. If you have completely abandoned the defilements, this means that logically, you would have abandoned both of these.

*Khen Rinpoche:* The very essence of the question is whether the disintegratedness of the knowledge obscurations is a functioning thing or composite phenomena?

*Student 4:* One would have to say that as a functioning thing, it is impermanent.

*Khen Rinpoche:* This disintegratedness happens *before* the abandonment of the defilements or *after* the abandonment of the defilements?

*Student 4:* We have already discussed this. It cannot be before but if after, there would be a problem.

*Khen Rinpoche:* *In between?*

*Student 4:* At the point of abandoning the defilements itself, this disintegratedness would also be abandoned at that point. If not, then there would be infinite regression, which is what we discussed for factors of disintegratedness. If we have infinite regression, then there is no end to it. We cannot abandon the afflictive or knowledge obscurations. So I would take the position that both the afflictions and the knowledge obscurations together with their imprints or predispositions are abandoned.

*Khen Rinpoche:* Let's go all the way to the last moment of the knowledge obscurations. At that last moment, the subtlest knowledge obscurations are abandoned. Does the cessation of the knowledge obscurations produce disintegratedness?

*Student 4:* Isn't it the case that there is no subtle mind in the sutra path?

*Khen Rinpoche:* Isn't (disintegratedness) produced?

*Student 4:* I would take the first position that it is not produced. It ceases together with whatever manifest obscurations there are.

*Khen Rinpoche:* There is the factor of disintegratedness of the cessation of the knowledge obscurations. That factor of disintegration is a non-composite phenomenon. The factor of disintegration exists. If it exists, it is either permanent or impermanent.

*Student 4:* So you are saying that it becomes a permanent phenomena because it ceases to exist.

*Khen Rinpoche:* This is a difficult topic. It is not clear in the great treatises.

But I am inclined to think that the disintegratedness of the path of seeing abandonments does not exist. In general, the disintegration of composite phenomena does produce a continuum of disintegratedness. But here, when we talk about the cessation of a particular defilement through the force of a powerful antidote, that particular defilement together with its continuum is severed and destroyed. This is what I think.

When you talk about functioning things:

- There are some functioning things whose disintegration produces a continuation of disintegratedness
- But there are also some whereby the continuation of the phenomenon itself is severed.

As such, when it comes to the defilements, through the force of the antidote, that particular defilement together with its continuum is severed.

We have to think a lot about it.

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