

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

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Lesson 15

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Discussing disintegratedness. The root text: Verses 49—53. Verse 49: Removing all doubts as to the faults of self-cherishing. Verse 50: Supplicating Yamantaka. Verse 51: Self-cherishing enslaves us in samsara. Self-cherishing and self-grasping. Verses 52 & 53: Destroying our self-cherishing and self-grasping.

DISCUSSING DISINTEGRATEDNESS

Related to our previous discussion on disintegratedness, if we were to compare these two phenomena, illumination and darkness, when there is strong illumination, darkness is dispelled right away. When that darkness is dispelled by illumination, is there a continuum of that darkness?

Khen Rinpoche: Any scientist here?

I think that when there is strong illumination, the darkness is dispelled. It ceases and there is no continuum of that darkness.

But when you turn off the light, the darkness returns. Is that a new darkness or the continuum of the previous darkness? What do you think?

I tend to believe that when darkness ceases, the continuum of darkness ceases. Likewise, I think similar to this example of illumination dispelling darkness is when the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness is generated with the attainment of the path of seeing. That particular mind on the uninterrupted path becomes the final antidote to the path of seeing abandonments. It is a forceful antidote. Through the force of that uninterrupted path, the path of seeing abandonments together with its continuum cease.

I have not seen this mentioned clearly in the treatises but this is what I think.

So back to the qualm from the collection of qualms from the exam. One of the questions was on the defilements: Does the disintegratedness of the defilements exist?

When the defilements cease, I think perhaps it is better to say that the disintegratedness of the defilements does not exist when the defilements are removed through the force of their respective antidotes.

Do you see any fallacies to this position?

Student 1: It is said that when we do Vajrasattva purification, we will purify our negativities and that karma is weakened. Instead of going to hell, we may suffer a slight headache. If the karma is completely purified and since there is no disintegratedness, then it should be completely gone. But why is there still this residual effect?

That is why I am saying that maybe there is some kind of disintegratedness of the defilements left behind. That is why we suffer a slight effect after that.

Khen Rinpoche: That experience is a very clear sign that you haven't purified fully that negativity. That is why your answer is in your question.

Student 1: So there is the disintegratedness of the defilement and that is why you suffer a side effect such as a small headache.

Khen Rinpoche: You can say that.

Student 1: So the disintegratedness of the defilement exists?

Khen Rinpoche: That is why you get a headache.

Student 1: So in the previous example, you cannot say that there is no disintegratedness, i.e., when the light comes on, the darkness completely disappears. In this case, it does not disappear completely.

Khen Rinpoche: There is no correlation to the analogy of illumination versus darkness to your example of purification of a specific negativity. The analogy works for my position when one generates the uninterrupted path of seeing that acts as the final antidote to the path of seeing abandonments. They cease completely.

Student 1: I see what you mean. Because the antidote is not strong enough, so there is actually still a side effect and the disintegratedness of the defilement exists.

Khen Rinpoche: It is still there.

What about if you have purified the negative karma completely? Is there any disintegratedness then?

Student 1: No there isn't.

You talked about the disintegratedness of karma and how the Middle Way School posited that the experience of the effect of negative karma is due to its disintegratedness after we have committed the action.

Is it the case that because of this action, the karma grows over time? For example, when you kill a mosquito today, 10 days later, it becomes the effect of killing a man. Because of this disintegratedness, it produces an effect that continuously grows more and more.

However, if you follow the lower schools, the karmic effect is actually deposited on the continuum. So in that case, it can't grow over time.

Based on the assertions of the lower schools, you cannot explain that increase whereas you can explain that increase based on the position of the Middle Way School. Because it is a composite phenomena, it can grow.

Khen Rinpoche: When an action ceases, it produces disintegratedness. Then there is a continuum of the disintegratedness. Of course we accept that. But how can you claim that just because it continues, it will become stronger and stronger, from moment to moment? How do you account for that increase?

Student 1: The way to explain it is like this. There are two kinds of cause and effect. One is, for example, a seed growing into a sprout. In that kind of cause and effect, the seed must cease. Then the sprout is produced. Once the sprout is produced, its cause ceases.

But there is another kind of cause and effect. For example, a child is produced from its mother. Even though the mother is said to be the cause of the son, after she gives birth to the son, she does not die. The cause is still there as she continues to produce other sons. This is the other cause and effect, meaning that the cause doesn't cease but it continues.

So with respect to the negative karma, based on its disintegratedness, the functioning thing actually continues to produce an effect as long as it is not purified completely and over time it will produce more and more effects. That is why after the killing of a mosquito, it can produce the effect of killing a man after some time.

Anyway, this example of mother and son doesn't come from me. I read it in lesson 19 of the last module and it came from Khen Rinpoche. I just read it so it crossed my mind that maybe this is why the effect gets more and more serious after some time.

Khen Rinpoche: I mentioned the mother and son?

Student 1: Yes, in lesson 19 where we were talking about different kinds of cause and effect. One is that the cause ceases and the other kind is that the cause doesn't cease.

Question: For those superior bodhisattvas who have completely ceased all the afflictive obscurations, i.e., the pure ground bodhisattvas, how would they be able to use the afflictions that they have already completely abandoned to benefit sentient beings like the impure ground bodhisattvas? Also, when they enter the tantric path, how would they be able to utilise afflictions like desire on the path to enlightenment since they cannot generate those afflictions anymore?

Answer: It is said that the bodhisattvas who are of definite lineage do not purposely focus on abandoning the afflictions, partly because the afflictions cannot harm them and also partly because they can use some of the afflictions as an aid to benefit others. Having said that, it is not necessarily the case that all bodhisattvas use afflictions as an aid to benefit sentient beings.

That is why it comes back to the question: What about the bodhisattvas on the pure grounds? The bodhisattvas on the pure grounds don't use afflictions as an aid to benefit others because they don't have any afflictions that they can use since they have already abandoned them.

Student 2: Perhaps this question is not so pertinent to this current module on the sutra path. We understand that eventually all bodhisattvas must enter the tantric path. As far as utilising desire on the path to enlightenment, every sentient being needs that to attain enlightenment. So if the superior bodhisattvas have already abandoned that on the eighth, ninth and tenth grounds and eventually enters the tantric path, how would they be able to utilise desire?

Khen Rinpoche: There are qualms on this point so we will look at this in the future. Perhaps in the tantric module, we will look at the meaning of taking afflictions as the path.

Student 3: In general, the entire spectrum of phenomena is divided into two classes, impermanent phenomena and permanent phenomena. It is not possible for an impermanent phenomenon to become a permanent phenomenon and a permanent phenomenon to become an impermanent phenomenon.

So when it comes to the disintegratedness of a mental obscuration, if you say that the continuum of the disintegratedness stops, it is equivalent to saying that a functioning thing has stopped functioning and becomes a non-functioning thing, a permanent phenomenon. So this is where the fallacy could arise if you were to posit that the disintegratedness of a mental obscuration stops, its continuum is stopped when the antidote is applied.

Khen Rinpoche: When you think of the example of illumination, when there is very strong illumination, there is no darkness at all. The darkness has ceased to exist.

Student 3: Yes, the darkness has ceased to exist.

Khen Rinpoche: So where is the function of the darkness? It is not functioning.

Student 3: Because the Prasangikas posit the disintegratedness of an event that happened in the past, so the function of that disintegratedness is to produce the next moment of disintegratedness in the context of something that has happened in the past. The continuum of the past cannot become non-existent. It is like that. That is one theory.

Any functioning thing necessarily produces a result so this disintegratedness is used to explain the continuum of something that has already happened in the past. It is used in the context of the explanation of time but not so much the normal concept of linear time.

The disintegratedness of a mental obscuration is different from the disintegratedness of the cessation of a mental obscuration. The words are different. Are the disintegratedness of a mental obscuration and the disintegratedness of the cessation of a mental obscuration the same thing?

Answer: If you think of a butter lamp or a flame that burns for an hour, up to the last moment before the hour ends, every moment is basically a continuum of disintegratedness. But in the last moment of the flame, the flame ceases to exist and it does not continue on after that.

Student 3: Yes.

Khen Rinpoche: So the continuum of the flame is severed.

Student 3: The moment of disintegratedness continues after the cessation of whatever phenomena we are talking about. If it is a flame, then we talk about the cessation of the flame. If it is a mental obscuration, then we talk about the cessation of the mental obscuration.

I'm talking about the disintegratedness that is not the literal translation of the cessation of the flame. I take the definition of disintegratedness to be a functioning thing that has the ability to produce the next moment of its disintegratedness, not that meaning of disintegratedness as in something that has ceased. That is at a coarse level.

If you look at impermanent phenomena at a deeper level, with respect to the continuum of an impermanent phenomenon, there is no beginning and there is no end. I mean if there's an end to an impermanent phenomena, that would imply that an impermanent phenomena, a functioning thing, has stopped functioning and therefore it has become a permanent phenomenon. So I would like to find out from Khen Rinpoche how I can reconcile this qualm.

Khen Rinpoche: When we talk about functioning things, there are basically two kinds:

1. There is a functioning thing whereby there is a continuum of that thing.
 2. There is also a functioning thing whereby its continuum is being severed.
- When a functioning thing exists, it exists in a continuum. But there are also functioning things whose continua cease. The question here is: For the functioning thing whose continuum is severed, does it produce disintegratedness in the next moment? This is what we need to think about.



REMOVING DOUBTS AS TO THE FAULTS OF SELF-CHERISHING

Verse 49

Since that's the way it is, I seize the enemy! I seize the thief who ambushed and deceived me, the hypocrite who deceived me disguised as myself. Aha! It is ego-clinging, without a doubt. ¹

Prior to this, there was much discussion about the faults of self-cherishing. The first part of this verse is expressing one's acknowledgement, understanding and recognition, "This is really true. My self-cherishing has all these faults. I now recognise them as such."

Just as a robber, bandit or thief takes away our possessions without us even being aware of it, likewise, our self-cherishing destroys us, taking away all our good qualities and so forth. The author is saying, "Now finally, I see self-cherishing for what it is."

When we talk about robbers or people who plunder our wealth, we can talk about it as being an outside job or an inside job. It is more difficult to recognise an inside job. If your loved ones, family members or people you trust are stealing from you secretly, it is more difficult to discover this. Likewise, this inner robber is like our self-cherishing attitude that takes away our virtuous thoughts.

The author is saying that prior to this, he thought of self-cherishing as a loved one, making friends with and believing in it. It is just like an insider job that we do not recognise. We actually think that the person who is stealing from us is so good! Likewise, with regard to our self-cherishing attitude, we think of our self-cherishing attitude as a friend, someone who is close to us. The author is saying, "Now I finally see the truth!"

Most of the time, many of us do not regard our self-cherishing as an enemy. Even when we have some inkling of the faults of self-cherishing, that our self-cherishing may be bad, we still have very strong doubts as to whether our self-cherishing is really *that* bad. How can self-cherishing be *so* bad? That is why we have doubts. But here, the author is proclaiming this sense of wonder and feeling happy, "Finally, due to the kindness of the guru and the Dharma, I have removed all doubts as to whether my self-cherishing is the enemy or not."

SUPPLICATING YAMANTAKA

Verse 50

Now, O Yamantaka, raise the weapon of action and spin it furiously over your head three times. Spread apart your feet, which are the two truths, open wide your eyes of method and wisdom, and bare your fangs of the four powers and pierce the enemy!

¹ "Seize the enemy" can be translated also as "recognize the enemy" and "ego-clinging" is another translation for self-cherishing.

Here, one is making a request to the deity, the wrathful Yamantaka, to destroy our self-cherishing completely. The main object of fury or wrath is the real enemy, our self-cherishing. We are supplicating the wrathful deity, Yamantaka, to wield his weapon over the head of this enemy.

“Now, O Yamantaka, raise the weapon of action and spin it furiously over your head three times.” The head of the enemy is the self-cherishing. Why three times? The “three times” here symbolise:

1. conventional bodhicitta
2. ultimate bodhicitta
3. the practice combining the conventional bodhicitta and the ultimate bodhicitta

Yamantaka, the wrathful deity, stands with his legs spread apart, with his right leg bent and left leg extended:

- The right bent leg symbolises conventional bodhicitta.
- His out-stretched left leg symbolises the ultimate bodhicitta.
- His two legs represent the two truths, i.e., in this context, the two bodhicittas.

Both his “eyes of method and wisdom” are wide open. That symbolises the practice of method and wisdom—the practice of conventional bodhicitta and ultimate bodhicitta—in equal measure.

“Bare your fangs of the four powers”: There are four fangs that symbolise the four powers² that pierce the enemy of self-cherishing.

SELF-CHERISHING ENSLAVES US IN SAMBARA

Verse 51

O King of Spells who torments the enemy, summon that vow-breaker who is destroying me and others, that savage called “Ego-Clinging, the Enchanter,” who, brandishing the weapon of action, runs uncontrollably through the jungle of cyclic existence.

“O King of Spells who torments the enemy”: “O King of Spells” can also be translated as “King of Mantras.” The enemy here is the self-cherishing attitude while the King of Spells refers to the attitude of disregarding oneself and cherishing others, prioritising others above oneself.

Many mantras can be recited including some supposedly very wrathful and powerful ones. However, no matter what the mantras may be and the quantity we recite, the recitation of mantras can never harm our self-cherishing. The only solution to our self-cherishing is the attitude of cherishing others. So reciting all these powerful and wrathful mantras, putting aside harming the self-cherishing attitudes, may even increase our self-cherishing.

Our enemy, the self-cherishing attitude, has bound us to cyclic existence making us wander there without choice just like a slave under the control of his master. It is saying that our self-cherishing attitude has made us circle in cyclic existence from the lowest of the lowest hells, Avici, up to the peak of cyclic existence. It is our self-cherishing attitude that has kept us circling over and over again in cyclic existence.

Self-cherishing and self-grasping

We have self-grasping, the apprehension of a self and we have the self-cherishing attitude. There is a discussion of the relationship between these two—which is the master and which

² The “four powers” refer to the four opponent powers of purification practice.

is the slave. According to this particular commentary, self-cherishing is the master and self-grasping is the slave.

In the earlier part of this text, it states how self-grasping is the master and self-cherishing follows the self-grasping. But here in the commentary, the status of the two roles are reversed. Here, self-cherishing is said to be the master and self-grasping is the slave to the self-cherishing.

Illustrations

Self-grasping and self-cherishing are different and are not the same. For us, we have not abandoned either of them and at all times, these two go hand-in-hand.

For someone who enters the hearers path and progresses along it towards the hearers path of no-more-learning, when he becomes an arhat (or foe destroyer), that hearer abandons self-grasping but self-cherishing is still in his mental continuum. In order for that hearer arhat to achieve buddhahood, he needs to enter the Mahayana path.

Of course, he needs to generate bodhicitta, the mind of enlightenment, in order to enter the Mahayana path. So when that hearer arhat generates bodhicitta, he enters the Mahayana path. With the generation of bodhicitta, we can then say that the self-cherishing in his mind is destroyed. Such an individual who enters the Mahayana path after becoming an arhat is someone who does not have self-cherishing and self-grasping.

For someone who enters the Mahayana path from the onset, i.e., without traversing the Hinayana path, by generating bodhicitta, he enters the Mahayana path and achieves the small Mahayana path of accumulation. Self-grasping is still there but the self-cherishing is very weak.

Then this bodhisattva moves on to the middle path of accumulation. I think that by the middle path of accumulation, definitely the bodhisattva would have realised emptiness. Because of his realization of emptiness, his bodhicitta is accompanied by this wisdom and as his bodhicitta is accompanied by the wisdom realising emptiness, his bodhicitta henceforth will not degenerate. It is said that from the middle path of accumulation, the bodhisattva's bodhicitta will never degenerate.

What I am saying is that for someone of definite lineage who enters the Mahayana path from the onset, there is self-grasping even upon entering the path. In fact, from entering the Mahayana path all the way up to the seventh ground, the bodhisattva is not able to abandon self-grasping.

The point is that self-cherishing and self-grasping are not the same. This is according to what is presented in the great treatises. Maybe it is better or easier to assert that self-grasping is the master and self-cherishing is the slave. The very root is the apprehension of the self. It is something to think about because sometimes, the roles seem to be reversed. Sometimes, in the text, you see that self-cherishing is the master and self-grasping is the slave.

“Summon that vow-breaker who is destroying me and others.” It is self-cherishing and self-grasping that destroy ourselves and destroy others. It is very rare for people who have self-cherishing to benefit others. Even when try to benefit others, when you look at it, the benefit offered is not really perfect and ideal so when we have self-cherishing, we cannot benefit ourselves and we cannot benefit others. Here we are asking this wrathful deity to summon the vow-breaker who is destroying others and us.

DESTROYING OUR SELF-CHERISHING AND SELF-GRASPING

Verse 52

Call him, call him, wrathful Yamantaka! Beat him, beat him, pierce the heart of the enemy, Ego! Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, false construction! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

“Call him, call him” can also be translated as “summon him, summon him.” “False construction” can be understood to refer to the discursive and evil thoughts.

We summon the enemy two times. This means applying the two bodhicittas—the conventional and the ultimate—to overcome the enemy of self-cherishing. We are imploring the wrathful Yamantaka to summon the enemy of self-cherishing. We are also asking the deity to pierce the heart of the enemy with the two bodhicittas and “roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer,” the one who brings about our downfall, the evil thought of self-cherishing.

“Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!” “Mortally strike” means to kill. “The enemy” is self-grasping and “the butcher” is the self-cherishing attitude. In order to kill someone and to make sure the job is done, one either stabs or shoots the person in the heart. Then the person will definitely be killed. That is the analogy but the meaning is this—with the conventional and ultimate bodhicitta, we strike at the heart of self-grasping and self-cherishing.

What does striking at the heart of self-cherishing and self-grasping mean? It is to know exactly their own uncommon modes of apprehension, i.e., how do these two minds operate? What is their view of the world?

So with conventional and ultimate bodhicitta, we strike at the modes of apprehension of the self-cherishing attitude and self-grasping.

When we see words such as to kill, pierce the heart of the enemy, smash them and so forth in the Buddha’s teachings, we have to be careful not to misinterpret them or to take them literally. The target is never someone on the outside. It is not the external enemy but always the inner enemy, the afflictions and in this case, the self-cherishing and the self-grasping that are being attacked.

- How do you overcome afflictions and this wrong conception? You have to target their mode of apprehension.
- How do you overcome a particular affliction or a wrong concept? It is through getting rid of the conceived object of the wrong concept.

So this is how you overcome a wrong concept, a particular affliction, self-cherishing and self-grasping.

Verse 53

Hum! Hum! O great tutelary deity, produce your miraculous apparitions!
Dza! Dza! Bind the enemy tightly! Phat! Phat! I beseech you to release me from all fetters! Shig! Shig! I beseech you to cut the knot of clinging!

This verse is similar to the previous verse.

“Shig! Shig!” represents the conventional and ultimate bodhicitta. With that, “I beseech you to cut the knot of clinging.” Here “the knot of clinging” refers to self-grasping and self-

cherishing. So how do you cut the knot of clinging? As mentioned earlier, you have to get rid of the conceived object of the particular affliction or wrong conception.

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*Question:* Just now you said it is better to say that self-grasping is the boss. If we were to say that up to the seventh ground, the bodhisattva superiors still have self-grasping, isn't it implied that if the master is around, the slave will still be around?

*Answer:* *The boss can be alone!*

*Do you understand what she asked? She was asking about the bodhisattva up to the seventh ground. He has self-grasping but not self-cherishing. She thinks that if you have self-grasping, you must have self-cherishing. So I said, "Not necessarily so as the boss can be alone."*

*Question:* I would like to ask about Verse 50.

Now, O Yamantaka, raise the weapon of action and spin it furiously over your head three times. Spread apart your feet, which are the two truths, open wide your eyes of method and wisdom, and bare your fangs of the four powers and pierce the enemy!

Why is it called "the weapon of karma"? How is self-cherishing the boss of self-grasping? As you mentioned earlier, the role can be changed.

*Answer:* Many a time, it is from an attitude of self-cherishing that self-grasping comes. When we cherish the 'I' strongly in a negative way, we prioritise the 'I' over others and then self-grasping comes. For us, we experience these two minds in both roles. Sometimes the self-cherishing acting as the boss induces self-grasping, but at other times, self-grasping is like the boss who then brings about self-cherishing. For us, we experience both.

*Question:* Does an arhat have a mental body?

*Khen Rinpoche:* I wonder if arhats who achieve the nirvana with remainder has mental bodies? Which tenets are you taking?

*Student 6:* With remainder means with this body?

*Khen Rinpoche:* I forgot what we said in the *Tathagata Essence*.

*Student 6:* The reason why I asked is that if they have a mental body, won't that mean there is no true suffering for a mental body?

It is possible to have self-cherishing yet not have a suffering body. Can it be that the body is not true suffering because of being a mental body? Does self-cherishing give rise to suffering? If the bodhisattva has a mental body, self-cherishing would not necessarily give rise to suffering.

*Answer:* An arhat has no suffering. That is why he is an arhat but does an arhat have self-cherishing? You have to say yes. It follows then that if one has self-cherishing, one doesn't necessarily have suffering, so self-cherishing doesn't necessarily lead to suffering.

Although the arhats are the same as us in having self-cherishing but that is about it. We have self-cherishing and encounter many problems as a result. The arhats have self-cherishing but

they don't have any problems primarily because due to their direct perception of emptiness, they have abandoned the afflictions. Their wisdom is very powerful.

Although like us, the arhats have self-cherishing but this is not to say that their self-cherishing is like our self-cherishing. Our self-cherishing is very strong but the arhat's self-cherishing is much weaker.

Although the arhats don't have great compassion but they do have immeasurable compassion. However there is some debate as to whether the arhats have great compassion or not.

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