

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 18

22 September 2015

Meaning of being dull-facultied and sharp-facultied. The root text: Verses 67—78. Verse 67: Desiring the best of everything. Verse 68: Entrusting oneself to evil spirits. Verse 69: Worshipping evil spirits. Verse 70: Carried away by distractions. Verse 71: Not seeking liberation. Verse 72: Wandering in remote places. Verse 73: Not attending teachings. Verse 74: Improperly using shared possessions. Verse 75: Seeking clairvoyance and fleet-footedness. Verse 76: Setting aside useful advice. Verse 77: Telling others' secrets. Verse 78: Short temper and excessive thinking.

MEANING OF BEING DULL-FACULTIED AND SHARP-FACULTIED

Question: I wanted to clarify the actual meaning of being dull-facultied and sharp-facultied. The reason I am asking this is because I am not sure whether this is necessarily the factor of being intelligent. There are very intelligent people who have no interest in the Dharma or who don't put much effort into Dharma practice even after meeting the Dharma. Yet there are people who are not so academically gifted but has tremendous faith and great determination in their practice.

Also Khen Rinpoche previously shared with us that even for yourself, you considered yourself not as intelligent as some of your classmates when you were studying but you completed your studies because you were very, very hardworking. So I thought it would be helpful to have an understanding of what it means to be dull-facultied and sharp-facultied.

Answer: What is the difference between a person of sharp faculties and a person of dull faculties? In the *Abhisamayalankara (The Study of the Perfections)*, you will find these two terms;

1. follower of faith—the dull-facultied
2. follower of doctrine—the sharp-facultied

Khen Rinpoche: That's it.

Followers of faith

There are people who have faith in Buddha. They have great devotion towards the Buddha because they think that he is very precious and holy. Someone may have told them that the Buddha is precious and holy and they believe this person. They don't

think much about why the Buddha is precious and holy. They just believe that he is so. Such people are examples of followers of faith. The followers of faith are those who simply believe but they don't really know why they believe and they don't have a valid reason for their belief.

Followers of doctrine

Then there are people who don't believe right away just because someone says the Buddha is very precious and very holy. Rather, they would analyse and think, "Why is the Buddha holy? Why is the Buddha precious?" Having sorted that out, when they are able to find the answers, then they develop faith in the Buddha. These people are said to be the followers of doctrine or literally, followers of Dharma.

So this is a difference between these two types of people.

If we were to compare the faith of the followers of faith and the faith of the followers of the doctrine, whose faith is of a better quality? It would be the faith in the minds of the followers of the doctrine, because they do not just develop faith in the Buddha without thinking. They think about it, "Why is the Buddha precious? Why is the Buddha holy?" Once they sorted out the answers, then they know. Because they see the reasons, then they develop faith in the Buddha. So the faith of the followers of the doctrine is definitely more stable and of much better quality. That is real faith.

In the teachings, it is mentioned that the faith in the minds of the followers of the doctrine is irreversible. Once they have developed faith through thinking, nothing can change their mind. Therefore, the faith in the followers of the doctrine necessarily will not change.

Although the faith in the minds of the followers of faith is faith, it is not stable at all and is subject to change.

Khen Rinpoche: Is it clear?

Question: In one of the lessons, it was mentioned that the practice of exchanging self and others does not fit the mind of the dull-facultied bodhisattva. How do I relate this to what you have just explained?

Khen Rinpoche: In the practice of the sevenfold cause and effect instructions for generating bodhicitta, one has to train according to the steps, starting from:

1. recognising all sentient beings to be one's mother
2. remembering their kindness
3. generating the wish to repay their kindness
4. generating the love that sees all sentient beings to be very precious and pleasant
5. generating compassion
6. generating the whole-hearted resolve (or pure superior intention)
7. generating bodhicitta

For the person who is training to develop bodhicitta through the exchanging self and others instructions, actually the essential points of the sevenfold cause and effect instructions are contained in that practice.

The sharp-facultied trainees have the wisdom to be able to reflect on the essential points of the sevenfold cause and effect instructions *while* they are training their minds in the system of exchanging self and others.

The very first step in training the mind in exchanging self and others is to equalise self and others. We have to ask whether we would need the view of emptiness in order to be able to fully equalise oneself with others. Do we need the view of emptiness to be able to fully equalise oneself with others by seeing how in emptiness oneself and others are equal in the ultimate sense? That is something for you to think about.

Normally, it is said that the sharp-facultied trainees realise emptiness first before they generate bodhicitta, the mind of enlightenment. They are considered sharp-facultied due to that reason as well.

It is said in the lam-rim text, *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, that the essential points of the sevenfold cause and effect instructions are contained in the practice of exchanging self and others, but not necessarily the other way round.

The quality of the compassion that is generated through training the mind in exchanging self and others is very different. The compassion is very powerful, especially if it is influenced by the view of emptiness. People who have the view of emptiness realise the root of samsara, the root of all our problems and how due to ignorance, sentient beings circle in cyclic existence. That kind of understanding induces very strong compassion in the trainees when they focus on how sentient beings are suffering. That strong compassion comes about because it is influenced and backed up by the view of emptiness.

Those trainees who have realised the emptiness of inherent existence see for themselves that what ignorance believes in actually does not exist, has never existed, and will never exist. But due to this fundamental mistake of not having realised this, then one and others circle in cyclic existence and suffer. Because of that single mistake—believing in something that never existed—one suffers and takes rebirth over and over again in cyclic existence. The compassion that is generated on the basis of such an understanding and influenced by such a view would be much stronger. As such, the strength of the bodhicitta that is induced by that kind of strong compassion will be stronger also. The wish for enlightenment to achieve omniscience is much stronger because it is influenced by this view of emptiness. As a result of this, one can posit that the speed of achieving enlightenment by such trainees would be faster than others.

In the common usage of the words, dull and sharp, the person who is sharp is someone who understands right away when we tell him something or explain something to him. Generally, we say that such people are very sharp.

Then there are others who need repeated explanations many times before they get it. Such people are called slow, “This person is quite slow and is a bit dull-witted.”

Those of sharp faculties who have joyous effort will definitely achieve their goals

very quickly. But even if one has very sharp faculties but is not very hardworking and don't have much joyous effort, one isn't really going to achieve the goal.

Although dull-facultied trainees may take a longer time to achieve their goal, but if they work hard, they will still achieve their goal provided they continuously put in joyous effort. They may take a longer time but they will definitely achieve their goal. So that is better than someone who has sharp faculties but doesn't do anything with them. They are not going to achieve the goal.

In general, the intelligent ones are usually a little less hardworking than those who are not so intelligent. I am not saying that is necessarily so but those who are not so intelligent tend to work harder because they know that they are not as quick as others so they put in more effort.

Khen Rinpoche: There is the story of the rabbit and the tortoise. You all know the story? Who wins in the end, the rabbit or the tortoise? There was a competition. It was F1 racing for them! In the end, the tortoise won. He reached the finish line first. As for the rabbit, he started quickly, then he rested and fell asleep or something like that. The tortoise walked slowly and he won the first prize.

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## DESIRING THE BEST OF EVERYTHING

Verse 67

All desires enter into me and I blame all my quarrels on others for no reason. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, false construction! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

“All desires entered into me” means that we desire the best of everything. We want everything.

Just as it is said in one of the verses of the *Eight Verses of Thought Transformation*, when others insult or abuse us out of jealousy, we should accept defeat and offer the victory to others. In the context of mind training, a pure practitioner of Mahayana does that.

We are the complete opposite. We don't want any loss. We only want victory and the best of everything for ourselves. We don't wish for any loss for ourselves. We wish that it doesn't happen to us, “If it has to happen, may it happen on someone else and not me.”

When someone points out our mistake or accuses us of being responsible for something bad that has happened, usually we do not accept the responsibility. Instead, we would say, “No, I didn't do this. It is someone else's fault. This person did this. He said that ...” We shift the blame to others. It is our self-cherishing that motivates us to behave in this way. As such, we need to destroy our self-cherishing.

**ENTRUSTING ONESELF TO EVIL SPIRITS**

Verse 68

Although I have put on the saffron robe, I appeal to evil spirits for protection. Although I have taken religious vows, my behaviour is demonic. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, false construction! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

“Although I have put on the saffron robe, I appeal to evil spirits for protection.” This refers to the conduct of some ordained people. The vows of ordination, the pratimoksha vows, are taken on the basis of taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Although one may have taken ordination vows, starting from the novice ordination, instead of entrusting oneself to the Three Jewels, the object of refuge that one entrusts oneself to are the spirits. That is incorrect. Again that is the behaviour of self-cherishing.

This also applies to Buddhists. A Buddhist is someone who has taken refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. So as Buddhists, we should only completely entrust ourselves, our hopes and so forth to the Three Jewels. But instead of doing that, we entrust ourselves to and rely on spirits and worldly beings. Among the refuge precepts, one of the things that one should not do after having gone for refuge to the Buddha is that one should not take refuge in spirits and worldly beings.

We may have taken the different classes of vows: the pratimoksha vows, the bodhisattva vows and the tantric vows. But instead of living our lives according to the boundaries set up by these different vows, we do not pay attention to them. We do not keep the vows well. Instead, our conduct and our actions of body, speech and mind are contrary to the vows. In fact, our actions of body, speech and mind may be like the spirits and demons. Such demonic behaviour again is the result of our self-cherishing. As such, we must destroy our self-cherishing.

**WORSHIPPING EVIL SPIRITS**

Verse 69

Although the gods give me happiness, I worship evil spirits. Although the Dharma guides me, I deceive the Three Jewels. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, false construction! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

When we talk about the enlightened activities of the wisdom truth body, there are two divisions:

1. There is the enlightened activity of the wisdom truth body abiding in the truth body itself.
2. There is the enlightened activity of the wisdom truth body abiding in the sentient beings who are to be helped.

The first line of Verse 27 of the *Tathagata Essence*—“Because a perfect Buddha’s body is pervasive”—talks about how the enlightened activities of the dharmakaya

reach out to sentient beings. Sentient beings can receive the enlightened activities of the wisdom truth body because the enlightened activities of the dharmakaya engage sentient beings. From that perspective, sentient beings possess the buddha nature or tathagata essence.

The teachings say that every single virtue in the continuum of sentient beings is the enlightened activity of the wisdom truth body. It arises due to the blessings of the wisdom truth body. Earlier on, we mentioned that there are two kinds of enlightened activities. One of them is the enlightened activity of the wisdom truth body that exists in the sentient beings that are to be helped. The happiness that all of us are looking for is the product of its cause, virtue. Happiness arises from virtue. Every single virtue in our continuum arose due to the blessings of the wisdom truth body. This is the enlightened activity of the wisdom truth body. This is something that we really need to think about—that every single virtue in the continua of sentient beings is basically the enlightened activity of the wisdom truth body.

Although all our happiness comes from virtue and in itself is the enlightened activity of the wisdom truth body, we are not aware of that. Instead, we seek refuge in and entrust ourselves to spirits. We worship spirits and worldly entities, believing that our prayers to them bring much success.

It is said very clearly in the eighth chapter of the *Ornament of Clear Realisations* on the topic of the wisdom truth body that every virtue in the continua of sentient beings is the enlightened activity of the wisdom truth body. In reality, the main thing that protects us from unpleasant and undesirable effects and all the sufferings is the Dharma. However, we don't accept that. We don't believe it is so and we think it is not the Dharma. We think it has to be something else. It is because of that person or this being or something else, but never the Dharma.

### **CARRIED AWAY BY DISTRACTIONS**

Verse 70

Although I have always resorted to secluded places, I am carried away by distraction. Although I request instruction in the holy Dharma and the religious sciences, I cherish divination and shamanism. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, false construction! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

“Secluded places” are isolated places; “divination” refers to *mos*; “shamanism” includes rituals, prayers and pujas.

Although we may resort to physical isolation and live in secluded places for the purpose of training our mind and practising the Dharma, our bodies may be isolated but our minds are always “going to town.” Again this is due to our self-cherishing.

Although one may come to a place for learning the Dharma and may be physically present, again the mind is somewhere else.

The supreme Dharma to be learnt and practised is the lam-rim, the stages of the path to enlightenment, and the Mahayana mind training. What ideally should be done is that we engage in extensive learning and reflect on what we have learnt so that we can internalise it and use it to train the mind. Although that is how we should go about doing things, i.e., study and reflect, but when it comes to putting the teachings into practice, we do something else such as learning how to do divinations (*mos*) for people, learning astrology and so forth to foretell the future and spending our time doing pujas here and there.

### **NOT SEEKING LIBERATION**

Verse 71

Forsaking the moral path to liberation, I cling to my home. Pouring my happiness into the water, I run after suffering. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, false construction! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

“The moral path” is the practice of ethics that is the path to liberation. This verse refers to people who are ordained. To be ordained, one needs to have some thought of renunciation, on the basis of which one then seeks liberation. The point of becoming an ordained person is that with that lifestyle, it is the method to achieve liberation.

But after becoming ordained, one doesn't keep one's ethical discipline and at the same time, one has no wish for liberation. Subsequently, one disrobes and becomes a layperson again. Because of that, so many complications arise in life with all kinds of problems and so forth. This happens as a result of self-cherishing.

### **WANDERING IN REMOTE PLACES**

Verse 72

Turning away from the gateway to liberation, I wander in remote places. Despite acquiring the precious jewel of a human body, I wind up in hell. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, false construction! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

The gateway or the door to liberation is the practice of the Dharma. In order to achieve liberation from cyclic existence, i.e., real, ultimate and permanent happiness, one has to practise the Dharma. Although one may wish and be looking for liberation, instead of practising the Dharma, one wanders “in remote places” for the sake of achieving the happiness of this life alone. Then one may even disregard non-virtue and accumulate many negativities that are the causes for rebirth in the lower realms.

### **NOT ATTENDING TEACHINGS**

Verse 73

Putting aside the particulars of spiritual development, I engage in

business. Leaving my guru's school, I idle about the town. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, false construction! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

Instead of going to where teachings are given by our teacher, we wander about in town.

That is again the result of our self-cherishing attitude.

### **IMPROPERLY USING SHARED POSSESSIONS**

Verse 74

Abandoning my own livelihood, I plunder others' property. Forsaking my parents' food, I rob others of sustenance. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, false construction! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

There are possessions that are collectively owned by a group of people. Let's take the possessions of the Sangha community as an example. There are common or shared possessions of the Sangha community. An individual member of that community may not use them without prior permission. If one were to use this common property without permission, instead of using one's own possessions, as mentioned in the lam-rim, the negative karma is extremely heavy. One will definitely experience and cannot escape the fruitional effect of that action.

"Plunder" here refers to the act of using such shared possessions, and in this context, using the shared possessions of the Sangha community without prior permission. The same applies to using the shared possessions of an organisation such as a Dharma centre. If one uses such possessions without proper permission, it is also a negativity.

There may be occasions where we actually have enough for ourselves and we can survive on our own. We can use our own possessions such as food, money and so forth but we don't want to use them. Instead, we take or steal the possessions of others. Again this is the result of our self-cherishing.

### **SEEKING CLAIRVOYANCE AND FLEET-FOOTEDNESS**

Verse 75

Aha! Although my endurance for meditation is small, my precognition is sharp. Though I have not realized even the beginning of the path, I run around to no purpose. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, false construction! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

"My precognition is sharp" can be understood to mean, "I have a wish to develop clairvoyance."

There are people who seek to be clairvoyant because they want to read the minds of



others, to see what they are thinking. In order to achieve any clairvoyance, one has to strive at the method for developing it over a long period of time, for months and years. Although one may have the desire to develop clairvoyant powers, one's endurance for the practice is small. After practising for a few months, nothing happens. But one gives people the impression that one has developed clairvoyance although one has not done so. One gives people this false impression and lies that one has clairvoyance.

It is not unusual to have different kinds of meditative experiences. During meditation, one can see all kinds of things. Often, people think that seeing such visions or experiences is something very special and very good. They feel good thinking they are progressing well and developing some kind of special abilities and powers. They may even think that they are beginning to have some kind of clairvoyance. They tell people, "I saw this. I saw that. I had all these kinds of experiences." They want people to agree that their experiences are true, valid and correct. But most of the time, all these happenings are due to the influence of spirits or maras.

"Though I have not realized even the beginning of the path, I run around to no purpose." Literally, this line refers to seeking abilities such as fleet-footedness. As a practitioner, our goal is enlightenment and omniscience. What we should do is to run quickly towards enlightenment. In order to do that, our mind must be conjoined with the path. We must enter the path in order to achieve it. This is the way to progress towards enlightenment.

But instead of doing that, we may look for instructions for developing common worldly attainments such as the attainment of fleet-footedness. By depending on certain practices and substances, one can develop the ability to walk very quickly and to cover a huge distance over a short period of time. Instead of developing the path in our mind, we pay attention to such unimportant accomplishments such as developing the power to be able to walk quickly!

### **SETTING ASIDE USEFUL ADVICE**

#### Verse 76

When someone gives me useful advice, my hostile mind takes that person for an enemy. When someone deceives me, I repay that heartless one with kindness. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, false construction! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

When people like our teachers and parents give us useful advice or point out our faults and mistakes with the thought to benefit us, we regard them as enemies. Then there are people who agree with everything we do or say, even though our actions may be wrong. But because they accord with our wishes, we regard these people who are actually deceiving us as kind.

"The heartless one" in Tibetan is an adjective that qualifies the person who is being deceived, i.e., oneself, and not the person who is deceiving us. What it means is that we lose our common sense and are not able to recognise what is right, what is wrong,

what is beneficial for us and what is harmful to us.

### **TELLING OTHERS' SECRETS**

Verse 77

I tell my intimate friends' secrets to their enemies. I shamelessly take advantage of my acquaintances. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, false construction! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

### **SHORT TEMPER AND EXCESSIVE THINKING**

Verse 78

My frustration is intense and my thoughts are coarser than everyone else's. I am hard to get along with and I continually provoke others' bad character. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, false construction! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

"My frustration is intense" refers to people who are very short-tempered. It doesn't take much to agitate them. All it takes is for someone to do or say something or maybe even look at them in a certain way. They get agitated and then bear grudges easily with a lot of resentment.

"My thoughts are coarser" refer to some people who have a lot of discursive thoughts and many worries. They think too much, "If I say this, what would this person think? What will he do to me? If I do this, what would this person think?" They think so much until they find it very difficult to do anything. Such people generally find it difficult to get along with others.

Again, it is our self-cherishing attitude that makes us very short-tempered and easily agitated. It makes us hold on to grudges and also makes us think unnecessarily to no purpose.

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