

## 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 19

24 September 2015

Meaning of blessings. Self-grasping and self-cherishing. The root text: Verses 79—86. Verse 79: Contrary behaviour. Verse 80: Being difficult to be with. Verse 81: Enmity towards holy beings & having great lust. Verse 82: Casting aside close friends & pursuing new ones. Verse 83: Faking clairvoyance. Verse 84: Lacking in Dharma scholarship. Verse 85: Habituated to attachment, aversion & envy. Verse 86: Putting down the Dharma.

#### MEANING OF BLESSINGS

*Question:* In lesson 17, it was mentioned that when we feel uncomfortable listening to the teachings on Mahayana mind training about the faults of our self-cherishing, it is a sign that the blessings of the lama have entered our hearts.

The qualm is that when we are driven by our ego and when somebody points out our faults and mistakes, there is a feeling of emotional discomfort and mental unhappiness. That is just a sign that we have a big ego! It is not really a sign that the blessings of the lama have entered our hearts.

Can Khen Rinpoche please clarify the meaning of having received the lama's blessings? I take that definition to be when the state of our mind has improved and when the frequency, intensity and duration of our afflictions are reduced.

*Answer:* In Tibetan, blessings is *jin lab*. This word has the connotation of change. Hence, to receive blessings means that you have made some progress internally and your mind has transformed for the better. That positive transformation is a blessing.

One of the factors that makes this positive transformation possible is the very nature of the mind itself. You have heard many times how our mind is in the nature of clear light. That is a fact and a reality. The nature of our mind being clear light is the basis for change. It allows change to happen.

Having said that, having buddha nature alone is not sufficient for change to happen. It doesn't necessarily mean that the mind will change for the better. We must meet with the different conditions for change to happen.

In the study of the workings of the consciousness or the mind, we learnt that for the

generation of a particular mind, there must be the coming together of:

- the objective condition
- the empowering condition
- the immediately preceding condition.

In the presentation of mind and awareness,<sup>1</sup> it was explained how the production of a particular consciousness is dependent on the coming together of a few conditions. For example, in order for an eye consciousness apprehending an object, e.g., blue, to arise, you need the immediately preceding condition, the objective condition and the empowering condition. In this case, you need the empowering condition, the particular sense power, and you also need a previous moment of consciousness, the immediately preceding condition.

My point is that in order for a particular mental event to manifest, many conditions must come together. As such, in order for a virtuous mind to arise, the conditions that are necessary for the manifestation of that virtuous state of mind must come together without which that virtuous state of mind will not arise.

It is said that every single virtuous thought that arises in the continua of sentient beings is the enlightened activity of the wisdom truth body. Whenever we generate a virtuous thought, that means we have been engaged by the enlightened activity of the wisdom truth body. We have received the blessings of the enlightened activity of the wisdom truth body.

If all the virtuous thoughts in the continua of sentient beings are the blessings of the wisdom truth body, then whenever a virtuous thought arises in us, among the conditions for the arising of that virtuous thought, what is the empowering condition for that virtuous thought? The empowering condition is the wisdom truth body.

To answer your question, what I said before was never meant to mean that you receive blessings when your mind is disturbed by others pointing out your faults. That disturbance is not a blessing. That is not what I meant.

We usually get upset when someone criticises us or points out our faults. The more they do it, the angrier and more upset we become. If we get angrier and angrier, that is not receiving blessings. Otherwise, every day, we will be receiving blessings! So that is not the meaning.

However, if as a result of someone pointing out our faults—even if we feel very uncomfortable, unhappy and upset—we are able to reflect on that criticism and come to realise that the discomfort and unhappiness we feel are actually the manifestation of our self-cherishing, *that* recognition is a blessing! That realisation and acknowledgement that our self-cherishing is the source of all our problems—that is the blessing!

It is impossible for us to receive criticism if we hadn't created the cause some time in the past. It is not possible to meet with the result of an action that we had not done.

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<sup>1</sup> Second Basic Program, Module 2: *The Study of Mind and its Functions*.

That is impossible. Then when someone criticises us, we are cognisant of the main cause of that criticism, i.e., we must have done something in the past that created the cause, the karma, therefore, we are being criticised now. As a result of knowing that, we are able to remain calm and relaxed and not be so affected as we know that there is no one else to blame except ourselves. That calmness of mind that enables us to stay composed and undisturbed is a blessing.

Thinking about this, we can see for ourselves from the bottom of our hearts that the main cause of all our unhappiness and problems lies within us and not externally. It is our self-cherishing attitude that is the root and the source of all our problems and sufferings. The person who has that kind of understanding from the heart realises the main cause of suffering does not lie outside but within herself. As such, when she encounters criticism by others, she would not blame someone outside because she realises that ultimately the source lies within herself. She won't see the need to retaliate and put the blame externally. She doesn't feel uncomfortable and upset with her critic because she recognises that it is her own fault. That is a blessing.

Therefore for the Mahayana mind training here, first, it is extremely important to realise that our self-cherishing is the source and the root of many problems. That is the very first essential step to be realised. The discussions and all the verses that we have covered so far are basically telling us the many faults of our self-cherishing attitude. Because of our self-cherishing attitude, we experience this problem, that problem, this unhappiness and that unhappiness. Comes the day when we can really feel, from the depths of our heart, that indeed our self-cherishing is the main troublemaker and the real source of our unhappiness, I think that would be the greatest blessing!

If we can realise from the depths of our heart that our self-cherishing attitude is indeed the source of many of our problems and difficulties, and if we are also cognisant of karma, then we will not meet with the results of actions that we did not do. With that kind of understanding, then whatever difficulties or unpleasant experiences we may encounter, such as people criticising or scolding us, we would always be able to stay very peaceful and undisturbed. This is because we understand and accept that these difficulties are due to our own fault and not someone else's. Furthermore, we may even be able to think, "This is wonderful! This is purifying my negativities!" This happens when we are able to have that kind of understanding.

For people who have realised that their self-cherishing is the source of all their problems, then no matter what befalls on them, their experience is as mentioned in Verse 96 of the *Guru Puja*:

Even if the environment and beings are filled with the fruits of  
negativity,  
And unwished for sufferings pour down like rain,  
I seek your blessings to take these miserable conditions as a path  
By seeing them as causes to exhaust the results of my negative  
karma.

Such people will be able to live their lives with the kind of view that is mentioned in

this particular verse in the *Guru Puja*. For every undesirable thing that happens to them, they are able to use those adverse conditions as the means for achieving enlightenment. In fact, for them, more difficulties mean more blessings.

### **SELF-GRASPING AND SELF-CHERISHING**

*Student 2:* To clear up this confusion about self-cherishing, can I confirm that the emphasis in this text that we are studying at the moment is to stamp out our self-cherishing, not self-grasping? This is the first thing I want to clarify.

My next question is: Where does self-cherishing come from? Does it come from self-grasping or does it come from the view of the transitory collection that perceives the individual self to be substantially existent? In one lesson, you mentioned that self-cherishing is the master and self-grasping is the slave but this is reversed in some texts.

*Khen Rinpoche:* I believe I have addressed this issue about the relationship between self-cherishing and self-grasping.

In the context of this particular text, the subject matter is training the mind to generate bodhicitta, the mind of enlightenment, and, in particular, training the mind to develop bodhicitta through exchanging self and others.

The greatest impediment or obstacle to the generation of bodhicitta is self-cherishing. Since self-cherishing is the greatest obstacle to the generation of bodhicitta, first we must understand all the faults of self-cherishing. Therefore in this text, there is so much emphasis on discussing these various faults of the self-cherishing that bring on all our problems.

As I said before, self-cherishing and self-grasping are not the same. They are not the same mind. They are different minds.

- How is self-cherishing overcome? It is overcome by generating bodhicitta.
- How is self-grasping overcome? It is overcome by the wisdom realising selflessness.

In the commentaries, you will find the words, the master and the slave, being used. Of the two—self-cherishing and self-grasping—who is the master and who is the slave? Sometimes, self-cherishing is the master, and sometimes, it is said that self-grasping is the master.

So far, based on this particular commentary that I am using, self-cherishing is said to be the master and self-grasping is the slave doing its bidding. But later on, you will notice a change as there is this discussion of how self-grasping is the master and self-cherishing is the slave.

When we think about this from our own experience, we will find that we have both possibilities. There are times when our self-grasping is the master and self-cherishing just follows the orders of self-grasping. But there are also times when our self-cherishing is the master. So in our minds, we have both. We have everything!

Our self-cherishing and self-grasping take turns to be the prime minister depending on the election result! <sup>2</sup>

I did explain to you before that, in general, it is easier for us to say that the master is self-grasping. It is said that every single problem that we experience, our entire samsara, has its roots in our ignorance. Ignorance is self-grasping. Self-grasping is ignorance. As such, we can say that our self-cherishing comes into being in dependence on our self-grasping.

Whether we say self-grasping, the view of the transitory collection or ignorance, they come down to the same thing. They are not exactly the same. They are different but at the end of the day, their meanings boil down to the same thing.

What is the view of the transitory collection? It is the mind that apprehends the 'I' in one's own continuum, not the person in someone else's continuum. It is the mind that apprehends the person in one's continuum to be existing by way of its own character or existing inherently. This is the view of the transitory collection. This is the root of our own samsara. This is self-grasping. If you want to talk about ignorance being the root of our own samara, this is called ignorance. The meaning comes down to that.

We are not saying that ignorance is necessarily the view of the transitory collection. If you want to talk about the root of cyclic existence, it is ignorance, in particular, it is self-grasping, and in particular, it is the view of the transitory collection, that is, the mind apprehending the person or the 'I' in one's own continuum to exist by way of its own character.

Why do we say that they are not the same thing but their meanings come down to the same thing?

First, we must understand what the view of the transitory collection is. It is the mind that apprehends the person included in one's continuum to be existing by way of its own character, existing truly and existing inherently. The view of the transitory collection is necessarily self-grasping but self-grasping, i.e., grasping at the self, is not necessarily the view of the transitory collection.

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## **CONTRARY BEHAVIOUR**

Verse 79

When someone seeks my assistance, I ignore him and secretly  
cause him harm. When someone agrees with me, I won't concur,  
but seek quarrels even at a distance. Roar and thunder on the head  
of the destroyer, false construction! Mortally strike at the heart of  
the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

There are times when people who we usually respect, such as our teachers, our parents and so forth, offer us good advice to help us but we don't pay attention to the

<sup>2</sup> Singapore had just held its general election on 11 September.

advice. Not only do we not pay attention, we purposely act in an opposite way.

There are also times when people show us respect. When this happens, all the more we should behave in an appropriate way towards those who accord us such respect. But sometimes we don't do that at all. Not only do we not show respect in return, we may even criticise the person and expose his faults. Somehow we are unable to show respect to that person, mainly because of our pride. If we analyse again, our pride comes from our self-cherishing. The point is that it all comes back to our self-cherishing.

### **BEING DIFFICULT TO BE WITH**

#### Verse 80

I do not appreciate advice and I'm always difficult to be with. Many things offend me and my clinging is always strong. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, false construction! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

Whatever others may do to make us happy or to please us, somehow we still feel uncomfortable and don't accept them. We may be easily offended. All it takes is for somebody to point out a small fault that we have. Then we become very unhappy. There are also people who harbour grudges and a lot of resentment in their heart. Again, this is the doing of their self-cherishing.

The stronger our self-cherishing, the more difficulties we experience. The stronger our self-cherishing, the harder it becomes for us to put up with difficult situations.

Perhaps we may have felt offended when someone says that we have a lot of white hair or we have a lot of wrinkles. These are examples of when we take offense. We feel offended because we have self-cherishing. If we have white hair, we have white hair. If we have wrinkles, we have wrinkles. These are facts. There is really nothing to be upset about. But we are like that. If someone were to tell us, "You are fat!" we will be so offended. But if someone says, "You are thin," somehow we are not so offended.

*Khen Rinpoche: I want to be fat. I tried so many methods but nothing works!*

Those who want to be fat remain thin, and those want to be thin always remain fat! This happens to all of us. We are offended by different things. So we just have to be aware of this, try not to take offence easily and also not to hold grudges for a long time.

There are people who bear grudges in their hearts their entire life and are unwilling to let them go even at the time of death. They even pray, "When I die, I want to come back and get you!" I personally have seen this for myself. Such things do happen. So, we have to try to let go and forget about such grudges. There is no profit to be gained from holding on to grudges because if we do, we only create negativities and make ourselves unhappy.

**ENMITY TOWARDS HOLY BEINGS & HAVING GREAT LUST**

## Verse 81

I exalt myself above the high and low and consider holy people my enemies. Because my lust is great, I energetically pursue young people. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, false construction! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

When we see people who have studied the teachings well, who are practising well and who are teaching the Dharma well, we should feel happy for them and rejoice. But instead of rejoicing, we find fault with them and criticise them. When this happens, this is definitely motivated by our self-cherishing. We must show respect to holy beings instead of criticising or putting them down.

In this context, we can read, “Because my lust is great,” as having a lot of sexual desire. Paedophilia is due to having very strong sexual desire. People may have partners and be in committed relationships but they may still have sexual relationships with people other than their partners. All these are the results of following self-cherishing.

**CASTING ASIDE CLOSE FRIENDS & PURSUING NEW ONES**

## Verse 82

Because my friendships are of short duration, I cast aside former acquaintances. Because my new friends are many, I lay before them empty promises of enjoyment. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, false construction! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

One may have strong friendships with certain people and consider them to be close friends. But let's say misfortune befalls a close friend. Maybe he becomes very sick, suddenly has many problems in his life or becomes very poor. When a close friend becomes like that, then one distances oneself from him. Some people purposely avoid their friends when they become poor, sick or have lots of problems.

There are also people who are very fond of cultivating new relationships and want to make lots of friends. So they put on a show by behaving nicely, talking nicely and putting on their best behaviour. In particular, when they find out that a particular person is very rich or has a lot of power, they will put in extra effort to be close to that person. In order to be close to that person, then they have to do lots of things like talking and behaving nicely. As before, all of this is just due to self-cherishing.

**FAKING CLAIRVOYANCE**

## Verse 83

Having no precognition, I eagerly resort to lying and deprecation. Having no compassion, I snatch away the confidence from others' hearts. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, false

construction! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy,  
Ego!

“Precognition” means clairvoyance. Some people give others the impression that they have clairvoyance and welcome people to seek advice from them. Actually they don’t have clairvoyance but they give the impression that they do. Then people will come seeking advice about various things. As one has no clairvoyance, one is basically lying in whatever advice one gives. Of course, some of the things that this person says is bound to be proved wrong. When he proves to be wrong, people will come back and say, “Last time you said this but it is not correct.” Since that person has to cover himself, then he has to tell more lies by saying, “That didn’t happen to you because of this and that.” There are such people.

*Khen Rinpoche: One person (A) went to consult someone (B). I think that person (A) was sick or something like that. The person he consulted (B) said, “Your sickness comes from eating too much meat” but this person himself (A) had been a life-long vegetarian. Of course, the person (B) had to say something immediately. So he said, “Oh, I am not talking about this life. You ate too much meat in your past life.” This person (A) told me this story. I didn’t make it up.*

In short, there are people who lie about having clairvoyance and they tell lie after lie in order to cover up. These are all the results of following self-cherishing.

#### **LACKING IN DHARMA SCHOLARSHIP**

Verse 84

Having studied little, I wildly guess about everything. Since my religious education is slight, I have wrong views about everything.  
Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, false construction!  
Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

Because of having heard very little of the teachings and having done very little reflection, one is unable to take a firm stand or a decisive point when one engages in Dharma discussions with others or when one is teaching the Dharma. One always says, “Maybe it is like this. Maybe it is like that.” One is just making wild guesses.

If one does not have deep knowledge of the teachings, if one hasn’t studied and reflected much, then one will not have a wealth of scriptural sources and understanding that is backed up by many different lines of reasoning. One may deny what others say. For example, during a Dharma discussion, someone might say, “It is not like this but it is like that because of this and that reason. It is mentioned in the texts.” Because of one’s limited understanding and knowledge, one can only say, “No, it is not true. It cannot be like that.”

This is one of the many reasons behind the need for studying and reflecting extensively on the teachings. When one’s knowledge is very limited and one hasn’t thought much about the teachings, backed up by reasoning and scriptural sources, then there is a greater possibility of one accumulating the extremely heavy negative karma of abandoning the Dharma.



Because one doesn't have a broad overview of understanding the entire Buddhadharmā backed up by scriptural sources and especially, reasoning, then when one hears something that doesn't fit with one's mind, one would think, "How can it be like that?" Even worse, one may declare, "No way! It cannot be like that. The Buddha didn't say this. This is definitely not the scriptures of the Buddha!"

So a person of little learning and reflection has a higher chance of creating the negative karma of abandoning the Dharma and also generating wrong views. Wrong views means actively denying the Dharma.

On the other hand, people who have studied extensively and have contemplated the teachings well are very unlikely to have this kind of wrong view and accumulate the karma of abandoning the Dharma. Therefore, it is extremely important to have a good understanding of the entire teachings of the Buddha, both sutra and tantra. Within sutra, there are the Hinayana and the Mahayana and on top of that is tantra.

There are people who know just one vehicle and say that tantra and the Mahayana teachings are false and are not the teachings of the Buddha. In particular, if one doesn't study tantra, especially its defining characteristics and special features, then one can have many wrong views and negative views about Buddhist tantra.

There are many people who only know the Hinayana teachings about the hearers and solitary realisers. They think only those are the Buddha's teachings and nothing else. That is why they say that the Mahayana is not the teachings of the Buddha and they put down the Mahayana.

Likewise, there are people who only know about Hinayana and Mahayana sutras but don't understand what Buddhist tantra is. Without investigating, they say, "How can this be taught by the Buddha?" and they criticise tantric teachings. There are many such people.

If we can gain an understanding of all the Buddha's teachings and at least have an overview of them, studying as much as we can, the chances of us having wrong views about the Buddha's teachings and accumulating the extremely heavy negative karma of abandoning the Dharma is much slimmer. Again, this is one of the many reasons for studying the Dharma extensively.

### **HABITUATED TO ATTACHMENT, AVERSION AND ENVY**

Verse 85

Habituated to attachment and aversion, I revile everyone opposed to me. Habituated to envy, I slander and deprecate others. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, false construction! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

### **PUTTING DOWN THE DHARMA**

Verse 86

Never studying, I despise the vast teaching. Never relying on a guru,

I revile religious instruction. Roar and thunder on the head of the destroyer, false construction! Mortally strike at the heart of the butcher, the enemy, Ego!

“I revile religious instruction” can be understood to mean that one criticises and puts down the Dharma.

Some people cling to a very small teaching of the Buddha and think that that is the main thing. By practising this small little instruction, they think they can achieve realisations and enlightenment. So they say, “You don’t need anything else. Why do you need to study all these complicated subjects? There is no need to study them. This one teaching is enough already.” These people then disregard their Dharma studies, not seeing learning as an important and necessary thing.

There are some smart, quick and intelligent people who can understand things fairly quickly and easily. Because they can do this, they say, “There is no need to receive all these oral transmission or the lineage of the commentaries. Why do you need to go and receive all these transmissions?” They look down on such things and disregard receiving such transmissions.

It is extremely important to receive the blessings of the lineage, whether it is the lineage of the oral transmissions or the lineage of the commentaries, because these lineages have come down to the present time in an unbroken line from the time of the Buddha. There is the blessing of this continuation of the lineage.

When we receive the lineage of oral transmissions and the lineage of the commentaries, because of the blessings imbued in these lineages, it makes a big difference to our actualising the path and attaining realisations. This is considered to be very important.

The Mahayana path of accumulation is divided into three levels. When one reaches the level of the Mahayana great path of accumulation, one achieves the meditative stabilisation called the stream of the doctrine. It is said that when one achieves that level, one will remember all the oral transmissions, the lineage of commentaries and all the teachings that one has heard for many lifetimes.

I wonder whether there is a connection between remembering all the oral transmissions and commentaries that one has received in the past when one achieves the meditative stabilisation of the stream of the doctrine on the Mahayana great path of accumulation. I wonder whether there is any connection with the blessings of these lineages.

It is important to receive these lineages whether it is the lineage of the oral transmissions or the lineage of the various types of commentaries and so forth. There are blessings imbued in these lineages because these lineages come as a continuation in an unbroken line from the time of the Buddha.

Personally I wonder whether one actually remembers anything at that time if one has not received the blessings of the lineages. The point is that you can remember

because you have received them but is it possible to remember anything if one hasn't received them before?

I think that there must be some significance or importance in receiving the lineages whether it is the lineage of the oral transmissions or the lineage of the commentaries. You do hear of people saying, "Why do you want to go and listen and receive all these transmissions?" I also heard people saying this, "Why do you go to these things? What is the point?" Perhaps, I think there must be some significance. I guess maybe it has to do with the blessings of the lineage.

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