

**Transcript of the teachings by Khen Rinpoche Geshe Chonyi on
*Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds, 2014***

Root text: *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* by Shantideva, translated by Toh Sze Gee. Copyright: Toh Sze Gee, 2006; Revised edition, 2014.

Lesson 4**18 February 2014**

Reflecting on impermanence. Chapter One: Verses 1.15 – 1.20. Identifying the nature of bodhicitta. Establishing the reasons of its benefits.

REFLECTING ON IMPERMANENCE

I spoke about the need to reflect on impermanence. If you remember, there is this statement from the treatise on logic that says,

Because it is impermanent, it is suffering.
Because it is suffering, it is selfless.

We must reflect on impermanence. Otherwise it will be difficult to practise any Dharma and it will be difficult to make one's Dharma practice pure.

When we talk about impermanence, we are not simply talking about death. The actual meaning of impermanence is momentary disintegration, i.e., how change occurs in each and every moment. It is not simply saying that impermanence means, in the case of our own life, that death suddenly descends upon us.

The reason why life ends with death is because life is changing from moment to moment and until death comes, one is getting closer and closer to that state. The understanding one should have is that, in each and every single moment, one is moving closer and closer to death, the end of this life.

Death is something that most people fear and dislike but nevertheless we are helplessly moving closer and closer to death in each and every moment due to our own karma and afflictions. We have no choice.

We came into this life and took on this body and mind. These aggregates came about under the control of karma and afflictions. We are moving towards death in each and every single moment. It is our karma and afflictions that is responsible for this. It is our karma and afflictions that have thrown us powerlessly into having this set of body and mind. It is that same karma and afflictions that are responsible for this body and mind and ourselves disintegrating, changing from moment to moment and ultimately dying. Because we are under the control of our karma and afflictions, therefore our existence is in the nature of suffering.

We are impermanent and undergo momentary change as do our body and mind.

Since this is the reality, there is no reason to grasp at and be attached to our body and mind by holding on to them as if they were not ever-changing. Our very existence is in the nature of suffering so there is no reason to be attached to or hold on to it as if it was something pleasurable.

Sometimes it is also explained that because the body and mind, the aggregates, are in the nature of suffering, therefore they are also unclean, filthy and dirty. Things that are dirty and filthy cause us to generate a sense of revulsion when we come into contact with them. When we relate this to our body and mind because they are dirty or filthy by nature, again there is no reason to grasp at and be attached to them. So the contaminated body and mind are objects of revulsion and not objects of attachment because they are by nature filthy and dirty.

How then is the complex of our body and mind selfless? Our body and mind are the results of our past karma and afflictions. Similarly, we ourselves, the 'I', the person, are also the products of that karma and afflictions. This being the case, therefore it is inappropriate to grasp strongly to the notion of the body and mind as being possessed by this 'I', that "they belong to me; they are mine." and so forth. It is inappropriate to grasp strongly to the body and mind as being mine because on the basis of that, we generate very strong attachment.

When we have a good understanding and reflect well on these points, how this body and mind that we have:

- are in the nature of impermanence
- are in the nature of suffering
- are by nature dirty and filthy
- are selfless,

then we will be able to work with and reduce our attachment.

In the past few lessons, we have seen how we have a suitable working basis, i.e., a suitable body and mind, for generating virtuous thoughts and, in particular, for generating the mind of enlightenment. But this does not mean that we will necessarily do so. It is very important to contemplate and meditate on death and impermanence. Otherwise there is no way to generate the mind of enlightenment.

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In the last lesson, we saw the benefits we will experience when we are able to generate the mind of enlightenment. In short, when we are able to generate bodhicitta:

- It will purify very powerful negativities.
- We will accumulate a great deal of positive potential and merit.
- Our own wishes will also be fulfilled.

The benefits of having generated bodhicitta is that we can easily finish the accumulation of merit and we can also easily purify those even very powerful negativities.

In the last lesson, we also looked at some of the analogies that illustrate the benefits of bodhicitta. We have completed that section. So if bodhicitta is to be generated,

what exactly is its nature? What is its entity and what are its divisions?

## IDENTIFYING THE NATURE OF BODHICITTA

### *Divisions of the nature*

In verse 1.15, we see how bodhicitta is divided by way of its entity. There are two types of bodhicitta.

#### Verse 1.15

In brief, you should understand  
The mind of enlightenment to be of two types;  
The mind that wishes enlightenment  
And the mind that engages enlightenment.

In order for it to be a mind generation, two aspirations must be present:

1. the aspiration for enlightenment
  2. the aspiration for the completion of the welfare of sentient beings
- There is a thought that thinks, “I must achieve full enlightenment in order to fully accomplish all the aims and welfare of others.” Here *others* mean all sentient beings. This mind is called a mind generation.

As to how to bring about this mind generation, we discussed this when we studied the lam-rim, the stages of the path to enlightenment. As you know, in order to generate this mind generation, one must train in the instructions for generating such a mind through:

1. the seven-fold cause and effect personal instructions or
2. the instruction of exchanging self and others.

Mind generation does not come about easily. There is a process that one must follow.

### ~ *Divided by way of its entity*

When mind generation is divided by way of its entity, there are two:

1. the aspirational mind generation
2. the engaged mind generation

- When we divide bodhicitta by way of its entity, there are two types, the aspirational mind generation and the engaged mind generation.
- When we divide bodhicitta by way of its boundaries, there are four types.
- When we divide bodhicitta by way of examples, there are 22 types.

In the module on the *Heart Sutra* (Module 4), we looked briefly at the presentation of the Mahayana paths and grounds. I think all of you can still remember that presentation. In terms of the five paths, we have:

1. the Mahayana path of accumulation
2. the Mahayana path of preparation
3. the Mahayana path of seeing
4. the Mahayana path of meditation
5. the Mahayana path of no-more learning

*~ Divided in terms of its boundaries*

When we divide mind generation in terms of its boundaries:

- The mind generation in the continuum of the ordinary bodhisattva on the Mahayana path of accumulation and path of preparation is called the mind generation of aspiring conduct.
- The mind generation in the continuum of the superior bodhisattva from the first to the seventh grounds is called the mind generation of pure noble intention.
- The mind generation in the continuum of the superior bodhisattva on the eighth to the tenth grounds is called the mind generation of full maturation.
- The mind generation in the continuum of the buddha superior on the buddha ground is called the mind generation free from all obscurations.

*~ Divided by way of examples*

When we divide mind generation by way of examples, there are 22 types. I believe we had looked at the first three types:

1. earth-like mind generation
2. gold-like mind generation
3. moon-like mind generation

*~~ Mahayana path of accumulation*

The Mahayana path of accumulation is divided into three:

1. The Mahayana small path of accumulation, i.e., the mind generation in the continuum of the bodhisattva on the Mahayana small path of accumulation is called the earth-like mind generation.
2. The Mahayana middling path of accumulation, i.e., the mind generation in the continuum of the bodhisattva on the Mahayana middling path of accumulation is called the gold-like mind generation.
3. The Mahayana great path of accumulation, i.e., the mind generation in the continuum of the bodhisattva on the Mahayana great path of accumulation is called the moon-like mind generation. Here we are talking about the waxing moon.

*~~ Mahayana path of preparation*

The mind generation in the continuum of the bodhisattva on the Mahayana path of preparation is called the fire-like mind generation

*~~ From the first ground onwards*

When the practice of generosity starts on the first ground, the mind generation in the continuum of that superior being is called the treasure-like mind generation.

This gives you an idea of the development of the mind generation. In the presentation of the ten grounds, there is a perfection associated with each ground. Likewise there is a name for the mind generation associated with each of those grounds. So there are ten types of mind generation. In particular, on the tenth ground, there are five types of mind generation associated with the tenth ground.

Finally, we have the last three mind generations that are named preparation, actual and conclusion.

- The preparation refers to the mind generation during the last moment of a sentient

being.

- The actual refers to the uninterrupted path that is the meditative equipoise of a buddha.
- The conclusion refers to the wisdom of the post-meditative session in the continuum of a buddha.

*Khen Rinpoche: If you are hearing this for the first time, of course, you would not understand what I just said. But don't worry. Just leave it at that for the time being. Now I am just throwing out the idea. Don't worry if you do not understand.*

For our purposes here, we have to proceed according to our root text. We have to know:

- What exactly is mind generation?
- What is its entity?
- If the mind generation is divided by way of its entity, there are two types: the aspirational mind generation and the engaged mind generation
- If the mind generation is divided by way of its boundaries in terms of the paths and grounds, there are four types.
- If the mind generation is divided by way of examples, i.e., the kind of minds it accompanies, there are 22 types.

At the moment, we cannot go into all this in detail. Perhaps, sometime in the future.

The point of me giving you a bit more information is to show you that a text like this is not as simple as it seems. Some people may think that this is an easy text, one that we can simply read and understand.

*Khen Rinpoche: I wanted to highlight that you should not think it is a simple text. Last time I explained the word, Sugata, even with just one simple word, you can explain it for 10, 20 hours depending on how one wants to elaborate on the explanation.*

| <b>DIVISIONS OF MIND GENERATION</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Entity</i>                       | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Aspirational mind generation (exists from the Mahayana path of accumulation up to the end of the continuum of a sentient being)</li> <li>2. Engaged mind generation (exists from the Mahayana path of accumulation up to the buddha ground)</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <i>Boundaries</i>                   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ordinary bodhisattva on the Mahayana path of accumulation and path of preparation – mind generation of aspiring conduct</li> <li>2. Superior bodhisattva on the 1st to 7th grounds – mind generation of pure noble intention</li> <li>3. Superior bodhisattva on the 8th, 9th and 10th grounds – mind generation of full maturation</li> <li>4. Buddha superior on the buddha ground - mind generation free from all obscurations</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <i>Examples</i>                     | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. On the Mahayana small path of accumulation: earth-like mind generation</li> <li>2. On the Mahayana middling path of accumulation: gold-like mind generation</li> <li>3. On the Mahayana great path of accumulation: moon-like mind generation</li> <li>4. On the Mahayana path of preparation: fire-like mind generation</li> <li>5. – 14. On the first ground: treasure-like mind generation There are ten grounds with a perfection associated with each ground. There is a name for the mind generation that is associated with each of these grounds.</li> <li>15. – 19. On the tenth ground, there are five types of mind generation.</li> </ol> |

| <b>DIVISIONS OF MIND GENERATION</b> |                                                                                                      |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                     | 20. The preparation refers to the mind generation during the last moment as a sentient being.        |
|                                     | 21. The actual refers to the uninterrupted path that is the meditative equipoise of a buddha.        |
|                                     | 22. The conclusion refers to the wisdom of the post-meditative session in the continuum of a buddha. |

*Explaining the divisions by way of analogy*

Next is an explanation of the two-fold divisions of bodhicitta by way of an example or analogy.

Verse 1.16

As is understood by the instances  
Of desiring to go and going,  
So the wise should understand respectively  
The distinction between these two.

For instance, someone who is seated generates the thought, “I want to go to this place,” but he remains seated. Then there is another person who generates this thought and acts on it by getting up and proceeding towards that destination. While he is proceeding towards his destination, there is still the thought, “I want to go to this place.”

In these two instances, the two people are similar in having the same thought of wanting to go to a particular place, but one remains seated while the other has acted upon that thought.

Likewise both the aspirational mind generation and engaged mind generation are the thought, “I must achieve full enlightenment in order to achieve the welfare of sentient beings.” They are similar in that respect, but in order to be an engaged mind generation, it has to be conjoined with the practice of the bodhisattvas such as the perfection of generosity. If the mind generation is not conjoined with such a bodhisattva practice, it is an aspirational mind generation.

If you prefer simplicity and you do not want to make things too complicated for yourself, you could just leave it as that, i.e.,

- If the mind generation is conjoined with the bodhisattva deeds, it is an engaged mind generation.
- If the mind generation is not conjoined with the bodhisattva deeds, it is an aspirational mind generation.

But then the question will arise, “What does it mean when you say, ‘the mind generation that is conjoined with the practice of the bodhisattva deeds, such as the practice of generosity?’”

Then you must answer that question. If you were to say that, in order for it to be an engaged mind generation, it has to be conjoined with the practice of the bodhisattva deeds such as the practice of generosity, another question arises, “Does that mean it has to involve the actual giving of some object as a gift?”

What is the meaning of the mind generation that is conjoined with the bodhisattva deed of giving?

At a simple level, you could just leave it as the mind generation that is conjoined and that is not conjoined with the bodhisattva deeds just like when we talked about the 22 types of bodhicitta. We left it at that. But if you were asked what exactly this means, then you need to think further in order to arrive at an answer.

The great masters debated and thought about this. They said that it is better to distinguish the aspirational mind generation from the engaged mind generation by seeing whether that mind generation is *directly* conjoined with the bodhisattva deeds or not. The word, 'directly,' has to be there. Whether it is an aspirational mind generation or an engaged mind generation, they are all necessarily conjoined with the bodhisattva deeds in one way or another. Therefore it would be better to insert the additional word, 'directly,' into the definition.

If you settle for that, then another question arises, "What is the meaning of 'directly conjoined'?"

*Khen Rinpoche: This is how the debate comes about.*

When we say a mind generation is directly conjoined with the bodhisattva deeds, this means that there is the aspiration for full omniscience, i.e., there is this mind aspiring to attain omniscience in order to accomplish the welfare of others. This aspiration for omniscience has to be manifest.

Take, for instance, the bodhisattva superior who is in meditative equipoise directly perceiving emptiness. From the perspective of that wisdom, nothing else appears to this superior bodhisattva except emptiness. In the continuum of this bodhisattva superior, no other minds are manifest except this wisdom of meditative equipoise.

Then another question arises, "In the continuum of the bodhisattva who is in meditative equipoise directly focussing on emptiness, is there bodhicitta or not?"

*Khen Rinpoche: What do you think?*

The question is this: Is there bodhicitta in the continuum of such a bodhisattva superior who is in meditative equipoise? The answer is either yes or no.

If you were to say, "No," then the question arises, "But isn't he a bodhisattva?"

If you were to say, "Yes," then another question arises, "How does bodhicitta exist in the continuum of such a bodhisattva superior in meditative equipoise?" If your answer is yes, you have to explain how it exists.

The mind of enlightenment or bodhicitta is a mind. If such a mind exists in the continuum of a bodhisattva superior in meditative equipoise, you must explain how it exists. You cannot say that bodhicitta exists in the form of an imprint or predisposition. If it is a mind, you have to explain how it exists as a mind.

Scholars of the past had different positions with regard to this issue.

- There were some who asserted, “No, bodhicitta does not exist because in order for it to exist, it must be manifest.”
- There were others who asserted that, in such a case, bodhicitta exists but it is not manifest.

According to the textbooks of Sera Je College, we assert that it exists but it is not directly conjoined with the bodhisattva deeds. As such, of the two—the aspirational mind generation and the engaged mind generation—the bodhicitta existing in the continuum of the bodhisattva superior in meditative equipoise has to be posited to be an aspirational mind generation.

In summary:

- A mind generation is a mind that thinks, “I must achieve omniscience, i.e., full enlightenment, in order to accomplish the welfare of sentient beings.”
- When you divide such a mind generation by way of its entity, there are two divisions: (1) the aspirational mind generation and (2) the engaged mind generation.
- An aspirational mind generation is a mind generation that is *not* directly conjoined with the bodhisattva deeds.
- An engaged mind generation is a mind generation that *is* directly conjoined with the bodhisattva deeds.
- What is the boundary of the aspirational mind generation? It does not exist in the continua of those who have not entered the Mahayana path and it does not exist on the buddha ground. It exists from the Mahayana path of accumulation up to the end of the continuum of a sentient being.
- What is the boundary of the engaged mind generation? It does not exist in the continua of those prior to entering the path. It exists from the Mahayana path of accumulation up to the buddha ground, i.e., buddhahood.

Does mind generation exist in the continuum of the Buddha? According to Gyaltsab Je’s commentary on *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds*, the answer is yes. Otherwise if you were to say that mind generation does not exist in the continuum of the Buddha, you would also have to assert that the Buddha does not have refuge, the Buddha does not have bodhisattva vows, the Buddha does not have pratimoksha vows and that the Buddha does not have tantric vows. Gyaltsab Je said very clearly that you must assert that the Buddha has mind generation. This is the position of Gyaltsab Je but one can deliberate on and discuss this further.

What is mind generation? It is the mind that possesses two aspirations: (1) the aspiration to accomplish the welfare of others and (2) the aspiration to attain omniscience or full enlightenment. The Buddha is already fully enlightened so does the Buddha still have an aspiration to attain omniscience?

*Khen Rinpoche: This is exercise for your brain.*

Likewise with refuge. Refuge possesses two characteristics. It is the faith in the power and the ability of the Three Jewels to protect us from the fears of the suffering of the lower realms and the suffering of samsara.



So this is something to think about. Does the Buddha have mind generation? If yes, does the Buddha have the aspiration to omniscience?

*Khen Rinpoche: Is your brain functioning or not functioning?*

It is clear now that the aspirational mind generation is not directly conjoined with the bodhisattva deeds. Having said that, with regard to all the benefits of bodhicitta that were explained earlier, is there any difference between the benefits of the aspirational mind generation and the engaged mind generation?

*Explaining the different benefits of the aspirational mind generation and the engaged mind generation*

~ *The benefits of the aspirational mind generation*

Verse 1.17

Although great fruits will arise in cyclic existence  
From the mind that wishes for enlightenment,  
An uninterrupted flow of merit will not arise  
As in the case of the engaging mind.

The aspirational mind generation is not directly conjoined with the bodhisattva deeds. As such, it is a mere aspiration and a pledge to achieve full enlightenment. Nevertheless, merely generating this mind of enlightenment definitely brings about full enlightenment. It is a cause for full enlightenment. It can still give rise to great results even in this life and bring about the happiness of humans and gods. It is the cause for such good rebirths. It is also the cause to eliminate all poverty.

The benefits of aspirational mind generation are stated in the sutra, *Liberation of the Superior Maitreya*:

Son of the lineage, it is like this. For example, the precious diamond though broken outshines the supreme ornaments of gold and it still keeps the name, “precious diamond,” and eliminates all poverty.

Son of the lineage, likewise, the precious diamond of the mind generation for omniscience, even without significance, outshines all the gold qualities of the hearers and solitary realisers. It keeps the name of “bodhisattva” and eliminates all poverty of cyclic existence.

The person who generates such a Mahayana mind generation, regardless of whether the mind generation is directly conjoined with the bodhisattva deeds or not, immediately outshines all the hearers and solitary realisers and acquires the name or title of “bodhisattva.”

There is a difference in the benefits of the aspirational mind generation and the engaged mind generation. As it says in the verse, “An uninterrupted flow of merit will not arise/ As in the case of the engaging mind,” so the benefits of generating the aspirational mind generation are not like the benefits of generating the engaged mind generation.

Although “an uninterrupted flow of merit will not arise/ As in the case of the engaging mind,” nevertheless there are many benefits from merely generating the aspirational mind generation. It is a cause for full enlightenment, one acquires the name, “bodhisattva,” it can eliminate poverty of cyclic existence and so forth. There are many benefits. So it is incorrect to say that there is no benefit to simply generating the mind of enlightenment alone. Therefore do not forsake this mind of enlightenment. When one’s mind generation is directly conjoined with the bodhisattva deeds, the ensuing benefits will be even greater.

~ *The benefits of the engaged mind generation*

Verse 1.18

For one who has perfectly adopted this mind  
With the thought never to turn away  
For the sake of totally liberating  
The infinite realms of sentient beings,

Verse 1.19

From that time onwards,  
Even while asleep or lacking conscientiousness,  
A force of merit equal to the sky  
Will continuously ensue.

When one’s mind generation is directly conjoined with the bodhisattva deeds, what kind of benefits will ensue? For a person with the engaged mind generation—even when he may be drunk, asleep or abiding in a state of non-conscientiousness—“a force of merit equal to the sky” is said to arise continually. Whatever such a person may do, there is always “a force of merit equal to the sky” that “will continuously ensue.”

The aspirational mind generation is just the mere thought, “I must achieve omniscience in order to accomplish the welfare of others,” whereas in the case of the engaged mind generation, one actually directly engages in the deeds of the bodhisattva. So an aspirational mind generation is a mere cause for enlightenment whereas the engaged mind generation completes the causes for enlightenment.

### **THE REASONS FOR SUCH BENEFITS**

Next is establishing that there are such benefits through scriptural authority and by means of logic and reasoning.

*Establishing the benefits by quoting scripture*

The next verse is establishing the benefits through scriptural authority by stating the source. Is this scriptural authority a proof for the benefits of aspirational mind generation or engaged mind generation? I’m not entirely sure but it may be better if we understand it to be establishing the benefits of the aspirational mind generation.

Verse 1.20

For the sake of those inclined towards the lower,  
This is taught along with the correctness  
By the Tathagata himself  
In the *Sutra Requested by Subahu*.

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Question: What is a waxing moon?

Answer: When you look at the moon from the 1st to the 15th of the lunar calendar, the moon becomes bigger and bigger. This is a waxing moon. On the 15th day, the moon is at its fullest, completely round. After the 15th day, you would not call it a full moon as the moon gradually becomes smaller and smaller.

Question: Regarding the benefits of bodhicitta and engaging in the six perfections, for someone like myself who has not even reached the small scope, I can, at best, only contemplate the seven causes and effect instructions and the practice of the six perfections. What should I do when I go home after listening to these teachings?

Answer: This text is an instruction for a practitioner of the Mahayana, i.e., for someone who can meditate on bodhicitta. Amongst practitioners, there are trainees of various differing abilities; those with the highest faculties, those with middling faculties and those with dull faculties.

Ideally, if you follow the scheme of things, first you have to develop renunciation and the determination to be free from samsara and so forth. But even if one cannot do that, the point here is that while one has the opportunity with this suitable working basis, one should try to accumulate as much merit as possible.

When you look at the training of a person of small capacity, one of the essential trainings is to reflect on death and impermanence. What should be the outcome of doing such a reflection? This reflection should help the person become a better human being with more of a good heart. When one realises death and impermanence, one comes to see the impermanence of one's friends, enemies and those who are not related to oneself in any way. They are all impermanent and they are all going to die. In that sense there is no real purpose to having attachment to one and strong aversion or dislike for the other.

Based on the reflection on death and impermanence, the result should be that one aspires to be a better person; at least, not to harm others and as much as possible to develop love and compassion. One of the results of contemplating death and impermanence is to arrive at this conclusion. This is the best way to extract the essence from this human life of freedoms and endowments. The way to make it meaningful is to cultivate a good heart and to develop love for others.

When you look at the training of the person of medium capacity, the essential point is to realise that everything in samsara does not go beyond the nature of suffering, i.e., everything in samsara does not transcend suffering and is in the nature of suffering. We contemplate the points we had discussed earlier: the impermanence of

composed phenomena, how they are in the nature of suffering and how contaminated phenomena are unclean and dirty. Because they lack a self there is no reason to grasp at or be attached to them. Through such reflections, one reverses and turns away from grasping and attachment. One cultivates love in their place.

What is found in the training of the persons of small and medium capacities—whether it be meditating on death and impermanence or the suffering of samsara—are methods for us to become a better person, a better human being with a good heart and to translate that into having better relationships within the family and with one's friends and so forth and ideally, finally, with all sentient beings. But this is not easy.

I guess the practice has to start like that. When translated into practice, this is how we have to start. You have to start with one's own family. The result of cultivating such a practice is first to see happiness and harmony within one's family where everybody is happy. This cannot be achieved when there is disharmony and fighting within the family. Then saying one is practising bodhicitta for the benefit of all sentient beings, that becomes just talk.

By thinking of death and impermanence, we can try to be a better person, a more caring and loving person. Also, by being mindful that life is short, you work at abandoning negativities.

Khen Rinpoche: This is the practice. Go home and start from your home. Don't fight at home!

Interpreted by Ven. Tenzin Gyurme; transcribed by Phuah Soon Ek, Patricia Lee and Julia Koh; edited by Cecilia Tsong.