

**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 8**4 March 2014**

Meditation on the body. Chapter Two: Verses 2.10–2.22. Mentally emanated offerings: surpassable offerings and unsurpassable offerings.

MEDITATION ON THE BODY

As I said in the previous lesson, many of our problems and suffering arise from our four erroneous conceptions. The method to weaken these four erroneous conceptions is the practice of the close placements of mindfulness. They are:

1. the close placement of mindfulness of the body
2. the close placement of mindfulness of feelings
3. the close placement of mindfulness of the mind
4. the close placement of mindfulness of phenomena

Close placement of mindfulness	Overcomes the erroneous conception of:
Close placement of mindfulness of the body	Conceiving that which is unclean to be clean
Close placement of mindfulness of feelings	Conceiving that which is in the nature of suffering to be happiness
Close placement of mindfulness of the mind	Conceiving that which is impermanent to be permanent
Close placement of mindfulness of phenomena	Conceiving that which is selfless to have a self

When you look at the four features of impermanence, misery, selflessness and being empty, one can reflect on and apply them to the complex of one's contaminated body and mind. One can reflect on how:

- one's body is by nature unclean
- it is impermanent
- it is in the nature of suffering (or misery)
- it lacks a self

When you look at the very nature of your body, it is in the nature of suffering or misery. No matter what you do to cherish and take care of your body, from its own side, all it does is give you problems and suffering. All it takes is a small problem or some small harm and your body will start to give you problems of much pain.

Although you put in so much effort to take care of your body by giving it food, clothing and so forth, what is the level of pleasure or happiness you get in return? The amount of resources and effort you put into cherishing your body are completely overwhelmed by just a small harmful condition. The effort, time and resources that you put into cherishing your body cannot protect it from even a small harmful

condition. This is a sign that the body you have has the nature of suffering. You just need a small harmful condition to experience pain. Despite putting in so much time and resources into taking care of your body in order to get some pleasure from it, from the side of the body, it gives you neither happiness nor pleasure.

The body itself is a source of suffering, therefore it has the nature of suffering. It is the very basis for all the physical problems, i.e., physical pain and suffering, to arise. The reason why we have all these problems is because the basis to experience these problems is there. As soon as we take on a body like the one we have, all it needs is a small condition to occur for suffering to arise quickly and easily. This is one of the meanings of pervasive compounded suffering (or the suffering of conditionality).

We eat in order to alleviate the suffering of hunger. Hunger is unpleasant and is a kind of suffering. But this kind of suffering cannot be removed because the body itself cannot remove this kind of suffering. The body needs to rely on the external condition of food. As it is in the nature of suffering, it is not able to bestow pleasure from its own side.

In the case of alleviating the suffering of hunger, the external condition, food, gives the pleasure that comes from eating. Although in this case food is an external condition for experiencing the pleasure that comes from eating, there is a limit to what food can do. This is because we cannot go on eating non-stop. From the side of the body, there is a limit to what an external favourable condition can do in terms of enabling us to experience pleasure.

However, when it comes to the conditions that produce suffering, the more conditions for suffering there are, the more suffering we will experience. The body has the nature of suffering because the more harmful conditions there are, the more suffering the body experiences.

There is a limit to how much pleasure the body can experience, even though there may be an abundance of favourable external conditions. After a while, the pleasure that is derived from these external conditions stops and it does not increase. This is the feeling of pleasure.

The teachings advise us that a method to stop any attachment and grasping for the body is the meditation on how the body is unclean, impermanent, in the nature of suffering and lacks a self.

It is very important that we continuously think about the four seals that attest to the particular doctrine that is the buddhadharma. These four seals are very powerful:

1. All composed phenomena are impermanent.
2. All contaminated phenomena are in the nature of suffering or misery.
3. All phenomena are selfless and empty.
4. Nirvana is peace.

In the first turning of the wheel of Dharma, Buddha taught the four noble truths, saying, "This is true suffering, this is true origin, this is the true path and this is true cessation." We have to understand the essence behind these four noble truths.

OFFERINGS (cont'd.)

We have finished with the offering of one's body. Next is making offerings that are mentally emanated, of which there are surpassable and unsurpassable offerings.

Mentally emanated offerings

~ *Surpassable offerings*

There are twelve kinds of surpassable offerings.

1. Ablutions

Verse 2.10

To very sweetly scented bathing chambers
With brilliantly sparkling crystal floors
And exquisite pillars ablaze with gems,
Having canopies above aglow with pearls,

Before one offers an ablution or bath, first one has to generate the bathhouse that should be visualised as very beautiful and pleasant and anointed with sandalwood fragrance. It has a crystal floor, shining with lights and so forth.

Next you offer a bath.

Verse 2.11

I beseech the Tathagatas and their children
To come and bathe their bodies abundantly
From many jewelled vases filled with waters scented and enticing,
To the accompaniment of song and music.

In order to do the bath offering, one invites all the buddhas and their children to take their place inside the bathhouse and you visualise that they actually enter the bathhouse. You then offer the bath to the buddhas and their children with precious vases made from gold and so forth filled with scented water and beautiful flowers. The whole bath offering is accompanied by song and music.

One can visualise performing the actual bath offering by oneself. In the context of tantra, when one is doing the bath offering, one emanates from one's heart various offering goddesses holding vases in their hands and they are the ones who offer the bath to the Tathagatas and their children.

After the bath offering is done, one visualises the water that has been offered flowing into oneself and all sentient beings in the six realms, purifying every one of our negativities and obscurations. In particular, one can visualise that the water flows on to the local gods, spirits and harm-doers, pacifying all their harmful intentions. In the place of their harmful intentions, visualise that these harmful spirits and so forth developing bodhicitta instead.

What is the reason for offering an ablution or bath to the buddhas? It is not because the buddhas' exalted bodies are stained. The buddhas' bodies are unstained. We do the practice of offering ablutions in order to purify the stains of our body, speech and

mind. In particular, we offer ablutions in order to purify the ordinary and impure appearances in our own minds.

Verse 2.12 ab

Let me dry their bodies with incomparable cloths,
Clean and well-anointed with scent,
After offering ablution, one visualizes drying their bodies with unequalled
cloths that is soft, clean and fragrant.

What do you do with the cloths that you used to wipe their bodies? What about the old garments of the Tathagatas and their children? You visualise they dissolve into either yellow or red light and that this light dissolves into you at the point between your eyebrows. Then visualise that you **receive** all the qualities of the buddhas.

2. Clothing

Verse 2.12 cd

And then may I present them
With fragrant well-dyed garments,

Verse 2.13 a

Manifold thin and soft clothes.

You offer garments after drying the bodies of the Tathagatas and their children. In terms of the aspects of the bodies to which we are offering garments:

- There are some bodies that are in the aspect of being devoid of attachment. To these guests, you offer the three robes of a monk.
- There are some bodies that are in the aspect of having attachment. To these guests, you offer clothes that are expensive, pure, soft, of various designs and so forth.

Think that by offering these garments to the guests, all the Tathagatas and their children, one is now clothed with the garments of shame and embarrassment. There is a difference between shame and embarrassment although both are similar in that they function to help us refrain from non-virtue.

- Shame is the mental factor that causes one to abstain from non-virtue on account of oneself.
- Embarrassment is the mental factor that causes one to abstain from non-virtue on account of others.

3. Ornaments

Verse 2.13 bcd

I adorn with hundreds of this and that supreme ornaments
The aryas Samantabhadra, Manjugosha,
Avalokiteshvara, and so forth.

One offers ornaments to those beings who are in the aspect of having attachment. There are many different kinds of ornaments such as earrings, necklaces, bracelets, anklets, belts and so forth. For example, as you can see in the thangka, Chenrezig has all these various kinds of ornaments. One also offers these to Samantabhadra, Manjugosha and so forth, i.e., to the eight great close sons. One can also offer to the

buddhas in the aspect of the enjoyment body. One prays and dedicates the act of offering ornaments so that one can actualise the signs and exemplifications of the Buddha.

4. Scents

Verse 2.14

Like polishing pure, refined gold,
I anoint the bodies of the Lords of Subduers that blaze with light
With the choicest perfumes whose fragrance permeates
Throughout the billion worlds.

In the context of tantra, one visualises offering goddesses emanating from one's heart and in their hands, they hold vessels containing perfume or scented water. They then anoint the bodies of the Tathagatas and their children.

After making this offering of anointment to the bodies of the buddhas, one prays to actualise this particular feature of the body of a buddha body in the future, i.e., having a body that is the colour of refined gold.

5. Flowers

Verse 2.15

And to the highest objects of giving, the Lords of Subduers,
I offer all enchanting, sweet smelling flowers,
Such as mandara, lotus, and utpala,
And beautiful, well-arranged garlands.

It is said that one offers flowers like mandara, lotus, utpala and so forth because these flowers give off a pleasant fragrant scent. One should also offer flower garlands that are well arranged and beautiful.

- When one offers loose flowers to those buddhas who are in the aspect of being free of attachment, one should visualise that these loose flowers transform into beautiful celestial mansions, parasols and victory banners.
- It is said that when one offers flower garlands to those buddhas who are in the aspect of possessing attachment, for example, in the form of the complete enjoyment body, one offers these flower garlands directly to them.

After offering flowers, one can make the prayer and dedicate the merit towards being able to actualise the realisations of the seven branches of enlightenment:

1. the branch of enlightenment that is correct mindfulness
2. the branch of enlightenment that is a fine discrimination of phenomena directly realising selflessness
3. the branch of enlightenment that is effort
4. the branch of enlightenment that is joy
5. the branch of enlightenment that is pliancy
6. the branch of enlightenment that is meditative stabilisation
7. the branch of enlightenment that is equanimity

6. Incense

Verse 2.16 a,b

I also offer clouds of incense
Whose pervasive sweet aroma steals away the mind.

One offers very fragrant incense. It is mentioned in some teachings that you can visualise billowing clouds of incense smoke going out to the ten directions and transforming into the seven kinds of jewels. You offer all of that to all the buddhas.

One can also think that all the suffering that exists in your own mental continuum and in the continua of others are cleared away. One prays and dedicates that, due to offering this incense, may one gain the ethical discipline that is pleasing to all the buddhas.

7. Food

Verse 2.16 cd
I offer to them the delicacies of the gods
With a variety of foods and drinks too.

One prays that by offering pleasant and delicious foods, one may achieve the supreme fruit of concentration.

8. Light

Verse 2.17ab
I also offer them jewelled lamps
Arranged on golden lotus buds.

The container is made of precious substances and adorned with lotuses and so forth. Inside the precious containers are shining jewels such as lapis lazuli and sapphire. These jewels radiate light that eliminates all darkness, filling the entire space with light. You offer that.

When you are making a light offering, although the offering that you are holding in your hand may be small, the teachings mentioned that you should visualise that:

- the container is as large as the three billion-fold world systems
- the wick is very big
- the amount of candle wax or butter (in the case of a butter-lamp) is equal to the entire ocean
- the light that comes from the light offering fills all of space

Then you offer that.

You dedicate the merit of offering light to eliminating the confusion of not knowing and to develop the mind that knows all phenomena. May the mind be filled with the illumination of wisdom.

9. Offering an inestimable palace

Verse 2.17cd
Upon ground anointed with incense
I scatter loose pleasing flowers.

Verse 2.18

To those who have the nature of compassion
I offer inestimable palaces resounding with melodious praises,
Beautified by and blazing with hanging ornaments of gems of pearls
That adorn the infinite space.

One dedicates the merit of offering the inestimable mansion to be able to actualise the great city of liberation.

10. Parasols

Verse 2.19

Eternally shall I offer to the Lords of Subduers
Jeweled parasols with golden handles
And pleasing ornaments embellishing the rims,
Standing upright, their shapes beautiful to behold.

I think it is alright if you were to visualise offering goddesses emanating from your heart and, in their hands, they hold various beautiful parasols, offering them to the buddhas and bodhisattvas. You pray that, due to the offering of these parasols, may you be protected from the heat of cyclic existence and the lower realms and may you come under the protection of the Three Jewels.

11. Music

Verse 2.20

Besides those, may collections of offerings
Resounding with sweet pleasing music,
Clouds that appease the suffering of sentient beings,
Remain individually

It is said in the commentary, “I also present the offering clouds of instruments and pleasant melodies that clear away the suffering of sentient beings and satisfies them just by their hearing the melodies.”

12. An unbroken continuum of blessings in the form of offerings

Verse 2.21

May a rain of flowers and gems
Descend continuously
Upon all the Dharma Jewels,
And upon the reliquaries and holy images.

One makes offerings to the Dharma Jewel. There is the scriptural Dharma Jewel and the realisational Dharma Jewel.

- The scriptural Dharma Jewel is the twelve branches of scriptures together with the volumes of texts.
- The realisational Dharma Jewel is the qualities of abandonment and the qualities of realisations in the continua of the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Then you have the reliquaries or stupas. There are many different kinds of stupas such as the eight types of stupas. The holy images are basically representations of the

body of the Buddha, in the form of statues and so forth.

One makes these offerings continuously not only to the buddhas but also to the Dharma Jewel and all the holy objects such as stupas, statues and so forth. It is said that when making offerings, one's offerings should be as plentiful as possible, pleasant, beautiful and of the best possible quality. As such, offerings that are mentally transformed and mentally emanated are very important.

This concludes the section on surpassable offerings.

~ *Unsurpassable offerings*

Verse 2.22

In the same way as Manjughosha and so forth
Have made offerings to the Victors,
Similarly do I bestow gifts upon the Tathagatas,
The Protectors, as well as their children.

The bodhisattvas abiding on the ten grounds are able to make many offerings that are mentally emanated and transformed. Here one visualises that one is making the same kind of offerings.

For example, when the bodhisattva Samantabhadra makes offerings, he emanates innumerable rays of light that goes out to the innumerable buddha fields. At the tip of each ray of light are Samantabhadras and those Samantabhadras again emanate from their heart innumerable rays of lights. At the tip of those light rays emanated by those Samantabhadras are also Samantabhadras. Then from the heart of those Samantabhadras, again innumerable rays of lights are emanated. At the tips of those light rays are the various types of offerings. Bodhisattva Samantabhadra then makes those offerings.

It is said that these great bodhisattvas make such extensive offerings through mental transformation. This verse is saying that we should think like that when we are making similar offerings. When we are making unsurpassable offerings, we should think that we are making the offerings in the same way as bodhisattva Samantabhadra.

It is also taught that one's meditation on love and bodhicitta are unsurpassable offerings. When you visualise your roots of virtue transforming into various offering substances, that offering also become an unsurpassable offering. All your activities of listening to the teachings, studying the Dharma, practising, meditating and so forth can also constitute unsurpassable offerings.

It is mentioned in *The Stages of the Path to Enlightenment* literature that making mentally transformed offerings is supreme. I guess this is taught from the perspective of those practitioners who are living a simple life. It is said that one can accumulate lots of merit by making these mentally transformed offerings.

Sometimes when we make offerings of actual substances, it can be accompanied by arrogance, pride, attachment or miserliness. In this text, Shantideva, who was a

practitioner living a materially very simple and contented life, emphasises mentally transformed offerings for his particular lifestyle.

It is also mentioned in *The Stages of the Path to Enlightenment* literature that making offerings is a supreme method for achieving enlightenment and also a supreme method to help one actualise bodhicitta. It is taught that one should not look down on the practice of making offerings. Rather, one should familiarise oneself with the practice of making offerings and also make mentally transformed offerings.

When we are making offerings that are mentally transformed, essentially you just imagine what you are going to offer. Let us say you are going to offer some precious stones or precious jewels. You visualise them in your mind, having them appear clearly and then you offer them. This is not a challenging or extremely difficult task but you accumulate a lot of merit in the process.

When you are making offerings to the buddhas, there are many different kinds of offerings that can be made. Depending on what is mentioned in the particular prayer that you are reciting, there are all these different verses on making offerings of various offering substances.

Whatever offering substances are mentioned, you bring them to mind, visualising and then offering them. This is what you have to think when you are reciting those verses on making offerings. When you are able to do this, you can easily accumulate a huge amount of merit and purify your mind of obscurations. This creates the cause to achieve enlightenment.

The bodhisattva on the first ground is able to emanate a hundred bodies and with those hundred bodies, he goes to a hundred buddha pure lands and makes offerings. The bodhisattva on the second ground is able to emanate a thousand bodies. He goes to a thousand buddha pure lands and makes offerings. Bodhisattvas who are on the tenth ground are able to emanate bodies equal to the innumerable buddha fields and make offerings there. If these bodhisattvas on the paths and grounds have to make such offerings, it goes without saying that we need to put in more effort into making offerings since we only have one body!

The Stages of the Path to Enlightenment literature mentions the power of the merit field and the power of holy objects. It is said that when one makes any kind of offerings to the merit field or to holy objects, it does not matter what motivation one may have, i.e., it does not matter whether one dedicates the merit that one accumulates through making such offerings to enlightenment or not, all the offerings one makes to the merit field and holy objects automatically becomes causes for full enlightenment. This is the exception and is due to the power of the merit field and holy objects.

Since such an opportunity exists, we should seize it. Therefore, whenever you have the opportunity, when you make offerings to the merit field or to holy objects, even though you may have something small in your hand, as I said earlier, you should visualise making extensive offerings. Then you can easily accumulate a lot of merit.

So far we have read many verses of making offerings. They pertain to making surpassable and unsurpassable offerings including the offering of one's body. When you have time, you can recite these verses slowly and visualise accordingly. You can accumulate a lot of merit in that way.

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*Question:* You mentioned that impermanence in samsara is caused by karma and delusions. Can I say that impermanence in samsara is not caused by these two causes alone? Because the blessings of the Buddha cause virtuous thoughts in the minds of sentient beings, the impermanence in samsara is also caused by the enlightened activities of the Buddha. Are the virtuous thoughts that are caused by the enlightened activities of the Buddha samsara or not?

*Khen Rinpoche:* Are you asking whether virtuous thoughts are samsara or not? In the first place we don't know what samsara is. Last time I asked, "What is samsara?"

*Answer:* First we have to pinpoint what constitutes samsara.

With regard to virtue, it is not the case that if it is virtue, it is *necessarily* not included in the twelve links of dependent origination. There are many virtuous projecting karmas and virtuous actualising factors that are included in the twelve links.

For example, the projecting karma for a human rebirth and the projecting karma for rebirth as a god are virtuous but nevertheless they are included in the twelve links. Such virtuous projecting karmas are nonetheless propelled by the ignorance that is included in the twelve links. Is the virtuous karma in our continuum included in samsara or not? Is it samsara or not? What is samsara?

*Khen Rinpoche:* Think!

*Question:* Pertaining to lesson 6, you mentioned that bodhicitta is mind generation and that mind generation is bodhicitta. They are the same. However is it correct to say that with respect to a buddha, mind generation is not necessarily bodhicitta? Because when you look at the boundaries of mind generation and bodhicitta, bodhicitta exists from the path of accumulation up to the end of the continua of sentient beings whereas mind generation exists from the path of accumulation up to the buddha ground.

This means that on the buddha ground, a buddha has mind generation but does not have bodhicitta. If a buddha has mind generation and does not have bodhicitta, that means mind generation is not necessarily bodhicitta. Am I right to say that?

*Khen Rinpoche:* Correct.

*Answer:* In Sanskrit, bodhicitta can mean Mahayana mind generation. In Tibetan it is *thekchen semkye*, i.e., literally Mahayana mind generation. When you translate *thekchen semkye* into English, you cannot translate it as bodhicitta. You have to say Mahayana mind generation. In English, the mind of enlightenment (or bodhicitta)

and mind generation are different words.

*Question:* You said we needed three conditions to achieve the perfect human rebirth. One of it is the practice of pure morality that must be complemented with the practices of the other perfections. In *The Foundation of All Good Qualities*, there is a verse that reads,

Even if I develop only bodhicitta, but I don't practise the three types of morality,  
I will not achieve enlightenment.  
With my clear recognition of this,  
Please bless me to practise the bodhisattva vows with great energy.

Is the pure morality that we need to achieve the precious human rebirth the same as these three types of morality that is mentioned in *The Foundation of All Good Qualities*?

*Answer:* I don't think you can link it in that way because the verse in *The Foundation of All Good Qualities* that says, "Even if I develop only bodhicitta, but I don't practise the three types of morality,/ I will not achieve enlightenment," "the three types of morality" here refer to the bodhisattva ethics.

The pure morality that is one of the conditions for achieving a human life of freedoms and endowments is primarily referring to guarding well the ethical discipline of abandoning the ten non-virtues.

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