

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

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Lesson 12**18 March 2014**

Chapter Three: Verses 3.1- 3.9. Rejoicing in virtue. Requesting the teacher to turn the wheel of Dharma. Requesting him not to pass into nirvana. Dedicating virtue.

CHAPTER THREE: THOROUGHLY EMBRACING BODHICITTA

The seven-limb practice or the seven-branched worship is a practice to accumulate merit and to purify the mind of obscurations.

In Chapter Two, the chapter on confessing negativities, we looked at the limbs of (1) homage, (2) offerings and (3) confession.

Here in Chapter Three on thoroughly embracing (or adopting) bodhicitta, we will cover the remaining limbs of (4) rejoicing, (5) requesting the teacher to turn the wheel of Dharma, (6) requesting him not to pass away into nirvana and (7) dedication.

REJOICING IN VIRTUE

For the limb of rejoicing, there are:

- rejoicing in the virtue of the causes for and effects of higher rebirths
- rejoicing in the virtue of the causes for and effects of mere liberation
- rejoicing in the virtue of the causes for and effects of unsurpassable enlightenment

Rejoicing in the virtue of the causes for and effects of higher rebirths

Verse 3.1

With joy I rejoice

In the virtue that relieves the suffering of unfortunate rebirths

Of all sentient beings

And in the abiding in happiness of those subject to suffering.

One brings to mind everyone who is accumulating the virtue that will result in the attainment of higher rebirth (or high status) either as a human being or as a god. Here we are rejoicing in the virtue that will lead to such high status that is *not* conjoined with renunciation, bodhicitta or the correct view. Even though this virtue is not conjoined with renunciation, bodhicitta or the correct view, nevertheless it is a cause for a good rebirth. One brings to mind such virtue and rejoice.

One should also rejoice in those sentient beings who have achieved good rebirths with excellent bodies, wealth, power, prestige, fame and so forth. When others are enjoying such attributes, rather than feeling jealous or generating a negative sense of competitiveness, one should feel happy that these sentient beings are enjoying such attributes. This is because they are enjoying the fruits of the virtuous karma that they have accumulated in the past.

When we see sentient beings accumulating virtue, no matter how small the virtue may be, nevertheless it will result in high status and a good rebirth for them. Rather than feeling jealous, we should rejoice and feel happy for them. Similarly when we see sentient beings enjoying the good things in life, such as having a good body, prestige, power, fame, wealth and so forth, we should also feel happy for them. We should rejoice rather than feel jealous as rejoicing helps to counteract jealousy. When we rejoice, we also accumulate a vast amount of merit and our mind will not be disturbed.

The point is that we should not feel disturbed when we see something good happening to others. Instead, we should rejoice and feel happy. When we are able to feel happy for others, it will be of great benefit for ourselves. We have to bear in mind that our discussion here is in the context of developing bodhicitta, i.e., the spirit of wanting to benefit others. In light of that, the practice of rejoicing is a preliminary to generating bodhicitta.

Rejoicing in the virtues of the causes for and effects of mere liberation

Verse 3.2

I rejoice in that accumulation of virtue
That is the cause for enlightenment,
I rejoice in the definite liberation of embodied creatures
From the suffering of cyclic existence.

We rejoice in all the virtue that was done for the sake of achieving either the hearers' enlightenment or the solitary realisers' enlightenment.¹ Here we rejoice in the virtue that is conjoined with the determination to be free, i.e., renunciation, and the correct view.

We also rejoice in the virtue of the effects, i.e., the attainments, related to mere liberation. We rejoice in those who have achieved the temporary attainments of the hearer's enlightenment or the solitary realiser's enlightenment. The temporary attainments refer to the attainments of:

- hearers who are stream enterers
- hearers who are once-returners
- hearers who are non-returners²

¹ Hearers and solitary realisers are Hinayanists, but they differ in their motivation, behaviour, merit, and wisdom. Solitary realisers are superior to hearers in all these respects. A hearer strives for nirvana on the basis of listening to teachings from a teacher, while a solitary realiser strives for nirvana in solitude, without relying on a teacher. (First Basic Program, Module 5, Lesson 15, page 5).

²A non-returner will never return to the desire realm again. (First Basic Program, Module 5, Lesson 15, page 5).

- hearers who have achieved the actual hearers' enlightenment, i.e., arhatship and who have liberated themselves from cyclic existence.

Rejoicing in the causes for and effect of unsurpassable enlightenment

Verse 3.3

I rejoice in the enlightenment of the Protectors
And also in the grounds of their children.

Verse 3.4

With joy I rejoice
In the ocean of virtue of generating the mind of enlightenment
That causes all sentient beings happiness,
As well as in the deeds that benefit sentient beings.

We rejoice here focusing on those who have actualised the complete abandonments and realisations as well as in the effects of temporary enlightenment, i.e., we bring to mind the qualities of abandonments and realisations of those abiding on the grounds, from the first ground onwards.

We have gone through the paths and grounds a little bit. When you know something about them, for example, the qualities of abandonments and realisations that are achieved on the various grounds, then you will have a lot of material to work with in terms of rejoicing. There is so much that you can bring to mind.

In Chapter One, we looked at the benefits of both aspirational and engaged bodhicitta. There are innumerable benefits to generating aspirational bodhicitta alone. On that basis, for those who then practise the six perfections, the merit that they accumulate is even more powerful. You can also bring to mind the benefits that are accumulated by those who have developed the thought of achieving omniscience or full enlightenment for all sentient beings.

In the *King of Prayers*, five types of persons are mentioned as objects of rejoicing: (1-2) buddhas and bodhisattvas in the ten directions, (3-4) solitary realisers, hearers still training and those beyond and (5) all ordinary beings.

We should also rejoice in the paths of the three kinds of persons of the small, middling and great capacities mentioned in the lam-rim.

It is said in the teachings:

- When we rejoice in the virtue of those whose level of mind is lower than our own, we accumulate more merit than those persons.
- When we rejoice in the virtue of our peers, i.e., those who are of the same level of mind as ourselves, we accumulate the same amount of merit.
- When we rejoice in the virtue of those whose level of mind is higher than our own, we get a portion of their merit.

When we see others doing good things, accumulating virtue and so forth or things are going well for them, we are told to rejoice and feel happy for them. When we do not do this, in its place, there is very often jealousy instead. Then we want to compete

with this person in a negative way. Our mind becomes disturbed and there is no peace. This is very clear and evident from our own experience. Rather than feeling jealous, when we can feel genuinely happy and rejoice for others, our mind does not get disturbed. Furthermore, there is peace in the heart and we accumulate merit.

It is difficult to measure the amount of merit that we can accumulate from rejoicing. It is not possible to express this in a definite way. But it is very obvious that when we rejoice, we will experience peace in our heart.

It seems that it is easier to rejoice in the virtue of the buddhas and bodhisattvas. Of course it is really difficult to rejoice in the virtue and good things that are happening to our enemies. Unless we are able to feel happy for and rejoice in the virtue and good things that are happening to our enemies, any other kind of rejoicing we may engage in will be superficial.

It is the same when it comes to generating or thinking about bodhicitta. You may have the feeling, “It is very nice. I will achieve enlightenment for sentient beings.” You feel good. But if you think about it, most of the time, somehow, the enemy is excluded from the sentient beings. As such, talking about bodhicitta is just that, mere talk.

Going back to rejoicing in the good things that happen to our enemies and rejoicing in their qualities. Even if we are currently unable to entertain thoughts of benefiting them, we have to at least start from being able to feel happy for them when they experience good things or when they are engaging in virtue. We should not hold on to grudges.

The point I am trying to make is that it is very important for us to learn and to train in being able to rejoice in the good things that are happening to those people we dislike, i.e., our so-called enemies. We should be able to feel happy that good things are happening to them and rejoice when they are engaging in virtue. Most of us are unable to do this. When we see our enemies, we cannot feel happy about the virtue they are accumulating. We should train our mind to think that it is pointless to be jealous letting our mind remaining disturbed. Rather we should think of the benefits of rejoicing. There will then be peace in our heart and we can accumulate merit.

Khen Rinpoche: I saw the news this morning. A very famous designer had committed suicide in her New York luxury apartment. She was considered a very, very famous designer. I think she was 49 years old, not that old.

You can see in the news all these famous actors dying by committing suicide at a young age.

Sometimes I think about this, “Why do they commit suicide?”

I can't see why they do this because they have everything. They are so famous. Everybody knows them. If they want to change their boyfriend or girlfriend, they can have 10, 20 partners if they wish. They have plenty of money, plenty of everything but they always end up committing suicide.

This means that something is missing. They feel so unhappy. Their minds are so unhappy..

Maybe this is the point. Maybe they do not know how to rejoice. I think most of them faced so much competition. When they are so famous, when someone else becomes more famous than them, they become jealous and unhappy. If something bad suddenly happens to them, causing them to have a bad reputation, then they feel extremely miserable.

If all these famous people knew how to rejoice, if they didn't have jealousy, then maybe I don't think they would die at such an early age like what I saw in the news this morning. I don't know the name of the very famous lady designer. Anyway maybe jealousy disturbed her mind.³

Jealousy causes great disturbance to the mind. As such we need to do something to counteract jealousy and the best antidote to jealousy is rejoicing. We should strive in the practice of rejoicing and become habituated to rejoicing. In essence, the mind of rejoicing is the mind that feels happy.

We have the accumulation of merit and the purification of negativities. Of these two categories, the practice of rejoicing falls into the category of accumulating merit. Various texts have explained the many benefits of rejoicing. By rejoicing, one subdues pride. When we practise rejoicing, we will see there are many practical benefits. When we rejoice in the virtue, possessions, qualities and practices of others, it serves to weaken our negative emotions such as jealousy, pride and competitiveness.

REQUESTING [THE TEACHER] TO TURN THE WHEEL OF DHARMA

Verse 3.5

With folded hands I beseech
The Buddhas of all directions
To shine the lamp of Dharma
For all bewildered in the darkness of suffering.

After the Buddha manifested the deed of achieving full enlightenment, he did not teach the Dharma for 49 days. After 49 days, the gods Indra and Brahma requested the Buddha to start teaching the Dharma. Indra offered a white right-turning conch shell and Brahma offered a thousand-spoked golden Dharma wheel to request the Buddha to teach the Dharma. It was due to the requests of the gods Indra and Brahma that the Buddha then turned the wheel of Dharma.

When one requests a teacher to turn the wheel of Dharma, it is said that one should make the request with one's palms folded in respect. This is an outer expression of one's inner desire for the Dharma and one's strong wish to hear the teachings.

This is how it should be. One must want the Dharma. From one's own side, one must

³ Khen Rinpoche was referring to the suicide of L'Wren Scott.

really want to hear the teachings. When one hears the teachings with this intense heartfelt desire for the Dharma, then hearing the teachings will be very effective and beneficial for the mind. Therefore, as mentioned in the lam-rim teachings, according to the code of ethical conduct for the ordained, the vinaya, one should not teach without being requested to do so.

Look at some of the accounts in the *Jataka Tales* that described the past lives of the Buddha when he was in samsara. There is an account of one of his past lives where the Buddha planted a thousand wicks on his body and used his body as a light offering to receive a single verse of the Dharma. The life story of the great Tibetan yogi, Milarepa, also shows how much hardship he had to endure before he received teachings. All these stories point to the need to have the intense desire for the Dharma and the ability to be able to bear hardship for the Dharma. When you have these qualities, receiving and hearing the teachings will be beneficial for your mind.

From your own side, you must want the Dharma very much and have an intense heartfelt desire for the Dharma. You see why you need it. You see that if you do not have it, it is not right. Likewise, you should see that it is the same for others. So when you request for teachings, it is not just for yourself but you must also understand that others are in a similar predicament, i.e., they need and they must have the Dharma. You then request the buddhas of the three times to turn the wheel of Dharma. You can visualise offering a thousand-spoked golden Dharma wheel to accompany your request. You should think that the buddhas accept your request.

For those of you who are doing guru yoga practices, you should visualise your guru to be inseparable from the merit field, from the buddhas. Then you request them to turn the wheel of Dharma and you accompany that request with an offering of a thousand-spoked golden dharma wheel. Think that your request is accepted. This is how you should practise.

When you are able to do this practice of requesting the buddhas to turn the wheel of Dharma, it is said that in future lives, you will not be a holder of wrong views and you will be able to continually hear and receive the teachings.

Holding wrong views is the greatest obstacle to practising the Dharma because when you have wrong views, there is no basis for practice. It is very important to be free from wrong views because if you have wrong views, say, with regard to the workings of cause and effect, there is no mental space for Dharma practice. Therefore it will be beneficial if, from life to life, you do not end up as someone who holds wrong views. This practice of imploring the buddhas to turn the wheel of Dharma will help.

REQUESTING HIM NOT TO PASS INTO NIRVANA

Verse 3.6
 With folded hands I beseech
 The Victors who wish to enter nirvana
 Not to leave migrating beings in blindness
 And to remain for countless aeons.

When the Buddha was about to pass away into nirvana, a householder by the name of Chunda requested the Buddha not to pass away. As a result of that request, the Buddha delayed his nirvana by three months.

There is a verse in the *Golden Light Sutra* that says that the buddhas do not pass away into nirvana and there will not be a time when the Dharma is not heard or taught. The Buddha showed the deed of passing into nirvana in order to ripen the minds of sentient beings. Buddhas do not die for they are completely free of birth, aging, sickness and death. But the buddhas show these various aspects including passing away in order to ripen the minds of sentient beings. It is a way of moving the hearts of sentient beings and persuading them to practise the Dharma.

The buddhas show themselves in various aspects to benefit sentient beings. The supreme emanation body (the nirmanakhaya) manifests the deed of passing away into nirvana but the complete enjoyment body (sambhogakhaya) never demonstrates passing away into nirvana. So when the buddhas manifest the deed of passing into nirvana, the buddhas do not really die but rather they are showing that aspect of passing away in order to ripen the minds of sentient beings.

So you bring to your mind all the buddhas and your own guru and with respect, you request the buddhas and the guru not to pass away into nirvana. You request the buddhas and the guru to abide for a long time, i.e., to remain for eons, in order to eliminate the darkness of ignorance not just for yourself but also for sentient beings, especially those whose minds are to be tamed or subdued by them. Think that they accept your request.

Requesting all the buddhas not to pass away into nirvana is the cause for our own life obstacles to be pacified and a cause for one's own long life.

DEDICATING VIRTUE

Next is dedicating the virtue that was accumulated. There is:

- dedicating in general
- dedication for the sake of the ill
- dedicating in order to alleviate hunger and thirst
- dedicating so that virtue acts as the cause to fulfil one's wishes

Dedicating in general

Verse 3.7

Thus by the virtue accumulated
Through all that I have done,
May all the suffering of all sentient beings
Be dispelled.

The dedication of merit means dedicating one's virtue and merit to the achievement of full and complete enlightenment but here, in this context, we are dedicating our merit to be able to actualise bodhicitta.

The development of bodhicitta has its roots in the compassion that wishes sentient

beings to be free of suffering. When we dedicate our merit by using Verse 3.7, we are dedicating our merit for all sentient beings to be free of suffering; so in a way it is a condition for thinking about and generating compassion.

We dedicate the virtue we accumulated in the past, present and future towards the elimination of the suffering of all sentient beings. Whether it is generating a motivation or dedicating the virtue, these are actions that move the mind in a certain direction. In this context, we generate the motivation to eliminate the suffering of others and we dedicate our merit for all sentient beings to be free of suffering. These actions move our mind towards compassion and as such, they have to come from our heart in order for our mind to move in the desired direction.

In this context, dedicating our virtue for the elimination of the suffering of sentient being has to come from the heart. When it comes from the heart, our mind will move in that direction. Dedication therefore is not so much about reciting the dedication prayers alone but recitation that must be accompanied by the thought behind it.

Dedicating for the sake of the ill

Verse 3.8

May I be the doctor and the medicine
And may I be the nurse
For all sick migrating beings in the world
Until their sicknesses are healed.

As mentioned in the verse, we dedicate the merit accumulated in the three times for the benefit of the sick. We become the doctor, the medicine and the nurse for them. As I said earlier, this is an exercise to move the mind towards compassion. When you dedicate your merit, you should dedicate it in this way. On a practical level, when you encounter those who are sick, as much as possible, you should also take care of them by attending to them, helping them, giving them medicine and so forth.

There is an account of the Buddha personally attending to a fully ordained monk who was sick and who had soiled himself. The Buddha personally washed him. The Buddha then said that monks should do this, i.e., they should also attend to the sick.

Dedicating in order to alleviate hunger and thirst

Verse 3.9

May a rain of food and drink descend
To clear away the suffering of thirst and hunger,
And during the eon of famine
May I myself turn into food and drink.

We dedicate our merit to be a cause for a rain of food and drink to descend in order to clear away the suffering of hunger and thirst.

~ The eons of famine, sickness and weapons

The eon of famine is when sentient beings will have to endure long periods of time without food and drink. We dedicate our merit to be a cause for food and drink to appear during such times. The Buddha told Ananda that any sentient being who

offers even a little bit of food to the Sangha, in dependence upon those roots of virtue, that person will not be born during this eon of famine.

There is also the eon of sickness. During this time, it is said that many sentient beings will suffer from all kinds of sicknesses. Therefore we dedicate the merit we have accumulated that during such a time may we become the doctor, medicine and nurse for sentient beings. The Buddha told Ananda that anyone who offers an arura fruit, i.e., medicine, to the Sangha, in dependence on the roots of virtue generated by this act, this person will not be born during the eon of sickness.

Then there is the eon of weapons. During this time, it is said that sentient beings will attack one another with weapons. We dedicate the merit we have accumulated that, during the eon of weapons, all weapons will be transformed into flowers. In one sutra, the Buddha said to Ananda that any sentient being who abandons killing for just one day and night, the roots of virtue accumulated will cause that sentient being not to be born during the eon of weapons.

(Khen Rinpoche went on to explain what an eon is. As he continued this explanation in Lesson 13, what has been presented in Lesson 12 will be consolidated with the explanation in Lesson 13).

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