

**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 14****25 March 2014**

Meditating on guru devotion. More on the eon of abiding. Chapter Three: Verses 3.21-3.32. Training the mind that gives away the body, material wealth and roots of virtue (cont'd). The actual. Concluding actions.

**MEDITATING ON GURU DEVOTION**

I have already talked about the meditation program. For those of you who have committed yourself to it, this is just a reminder that the topic of meditation for now is correctly relying on the virtuous friend.

Sometimes it is helpful to memorise certain scriptural citations as a basis for meditating on the topic. For example, there is this verse by Gyalwa Ensapa that says:

In brief:

Your experiences and realisations will be great or small  
 Just as your familiarity with faith is great or small.  
 Your kind guru is the source of siddhis.  
 Contemplate his qualities and ignore his faults.  
 Hold his instructions in your palm,  
 And promise to keep them to the last.<sup>1</sup>

It is the same when you look at the first verse of *The Foundation of All Good Qualities*:

The foundation of all good qualities is the perfect pure guru.  
 Correct devotion to him is the root of the path.  
 By clearing seeing this and applying great effort  
 Please bless me to rely upon him with great respect.

Meditating on this topic of correctly relying on the virtuous friend is mainly cultivating faith in the virtuous friend and the guru.

One may then ask, “What is the sign of having faith in the guru? How does one know whether one has faith in the guru?”

<sup>1</sup> Page 274-275, *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand: A concise discourse on the path to enlightenment* by Pabongka Rinpoche, translated by Michael Richards. Copyright: Michael Richards, 1991. Wisdom Publications, Revised Edition, 1993.

This is what I think: when you are reprimanded or scolded by the guru and you are able to see that reprimand or scolding as the recitation of a wrathful mantra, perhaps this is a sign that you have faith in the virtuous friend. I remember the master Padampa Sangye said this. He also said that to be hit by the guru is like receiving an empowerment. When you receive an empowerment, you generate the thought that such and such an obstacle or hindrance is removed. It is said that getting hit or struck by the guru is like receiving an empowerment that clears away your obstacles.

Of course, this only applies when the guru is a valid qualified guru. The qualified guru is the destroyer of our three mental poisons—ignorance, anger and attachment—and our self-cherishing attitude. This is the function of the guru.

The disciple or student also has to be qualified.

But in this day and age, it is extremely difficult to find a truly qualified guru and it is also extremely rare to have qualified students. In this day and age, students consider:

- gurus who hurt their self-cherishing to be bad
- gurus who support their self-cherishing to be good
- gurus whose wishes accord with their own wishes to be good
- gurus whose instructions do not accord with their own wishes to be bad

What I think is that these days the roles of the guru and student have reversed. Essentially, the student becomes the guru of the guru.

*Khen Rinpoche: When you think about this very carefully, it has become like that.*

These days, in the way they act and speak, the gurus have to take into consideration how the students may think and feel. Nowadays, it has come to a point when the guru cannot even speak directly, honestly and truthfully to the students. In reality that should not be the case.

In the context of a qualified guru:

- When one has faith, one will be able to follow the advice given by the guru and there is no difficulty in following such advice.
- When one has faith, being reprimanded or scolded by the guru does not become an issue or problem.
- When one has faith, not only would one not feel bad about being reprimanded or scolded but instead one feels happy because one sees that one's fault or mistake has been exposed and therefore one can change.

It is only through such a process that one can progress, change and gain realisations.

Therefore this particular verse by Gyalwa Ensapa is very effective for the mind. You should memorise it and use it as a basis for reflection, "In brief: Your experiences and realisations will be great or small/Just as your familiarity with faith is great or small."

This is something you have to figure out for yourself. It all boils down to faith. You

have to see for yourself that your own level of progress and attainment is commensurate with your faith and how when you have more faith, you will profit more. This is something for you to think about and to keep in mind.

This is very important because the teachings on guru devotion always mention that faith is very important. When you have faith, everything works. It is evident that whenever you have faith in something, whatever it may be, it is very helpful. When you have faith, it urges you on to want to attain, learn or understand that thing. So when you are meditating on guru devotion, primarily it has to do with cultivating faith in your guru.

As of now we have allocated three months to this topic but we may shorten it to two months if you find it too long. We will see how it goes.

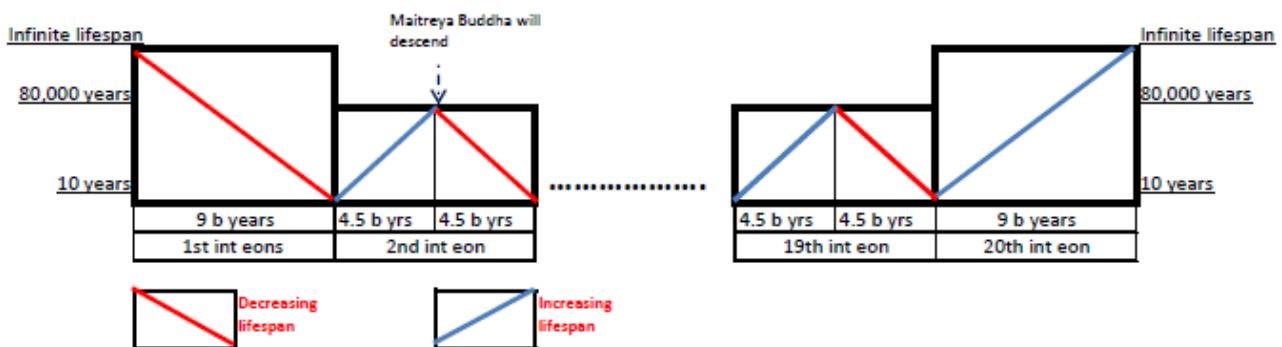


### MORE ON THE EON OF ABIDING

I mentioned that during the eon of abiding, the average lifespan of human beings starts from an infinite lifespan, i.e., a very long lifespan. It then gradually decreases to 80,000 years all the way down to 10 years. The averages lifespan of human beings then increases again from 10 years to 80,000 years.

When the average lifespan starts to decrease from 80,000 years, this is the time when Maitreya Buddha will descend.

Chart : The 20 intermediate eons of eon of abiding



Some students have mentioned to me that Maitreya Buddha will descend when the average lifespan of human being reaches 10 years .

Maitreya Buddha will *not* descend when the average lifespan of human beings is 10 years in the form of the supreme emanation body. Rather an emanation of Maitreya Buddha will appear during that time. When the average lifespan is 10 years, the human beings of that period will be very short with a height of about six inches. The emanation of Maitreya Buddha will have a height of 12 inches, i.e., double that of an average human being.

When the human beings of that time see that Maitreya Buddha is different from

them, they will ask him, “Why is it that you have a much bigger body than us?” This emanation of Maitreya Buddha will then reply, “I have such a body because I have abandoned killing, I practised patience and so forth.”

As a result of hearing this, these human beings will also start the practice of abandoning the ten non-virtues. As a result of practising the ethical discipline of abandoning the ten non-virtues, the average lifespan of the human beings will then start to increase all the way up to 80,000 years. Only then will Maitreya Buddha descend in the form of the supreme emanation body. It is said that Maitreya Buddha will be born in the place where Shakyamuni Buddha showed the deed of passing away into parinirvana, i.e., Maitreya Buddha will be born in Kushinagar. This is the explanation in some commentaries.

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### **TRAINING IN THE MIND THAT GIVES AWAY BODY, MATERIAL WEALTH AND ROOTS OF VIRTUE (cont’d)**

*Aspiring for virtue to become a cause for material resources and so forth*

~ *Aspiring for more extensive times and functions*

We have finished the verses of dedication that are essentially for generating very extensive aspirations.

Verse 3.21

Just like the great elements, such as earth,  
And like space,  
May I always be many varieties of bases of sustenance  
For the boundless sentient beings.

~ *Aspiring for no discontinuity in object and times*

Verse 3.22

Likewise, until all attain nirvana,  
May I also be the source of sustenance  
For all the realms of sentient beings  
That reach unto the ends of space.

This verse is saying, “For as long as sentient beings exist, may I be the source of sustenance for them.” This is making extensive aspirations to be able to benefit sentient beings for a very long time. Here you are making the aspiration to be able to actualise this.

If you remember, the context of our discussions here is that prior to adopting bodhicitta, one has to train the mind in some preliminaries, one of which is to dedicate one’s body, possessions and roots of virtue to others. Initially one trains in giving one’s body, possessions and roots of virtue and dedicating them to all sentient beings at a mental level.

But even after one has generated bodhicitta, one has to continually train the mind to

be able to dedicate these things to others. Through such training, there will come a time when one will be able to dedicate and actually give them away. In fact, there must come a time when one must give these away.

You may recall during the module on the stages of the path to enlightenment, there was the discussion on how we should make use of this body after we have, from the bottom of our heart, dedicated it to all sentient beings. We still have to use our body. We still have to eat. We still have to take care of the body by putting on clothes and so forth. But all these have to be done with the motivation of benefiting others. The teachings tell us that we should keep this in mind as much as possible whenever we utilise the various objects of enjoyment.

So now we have concluded the preliminaries for adopting bodhicitta through a ritual. Now is the actual adoption of bodhicitta, i.e., taking the bodhisattva vows.

### THE ACTUAL

Verse 3.23

Just as the previous Sugatas  
Generated the mind of enlightenment,  
And just as they dwelt according to the stages  
In the trainings of a bodhisattva;

Verse 3.24

Likewise for the benefit of migrating beings,  
I shall generate the mind of enlightenment,  
And likewise I shall  
Learn the trainings according to the stages.

Verse 3.23 is saying that we take the buddhas as an example: how the buddhas generated bodhicitta, abide on the grounds and how they engaged in the bodhisattva deeds, the training of bodhisattvas.

“Likewise for the benefit of migrating beings,/I shall generate the mind of enlightenment”: This is generating the aspirational mind of enlightenment.

“And likewise I shall/ Learn the trainings according to the stages”: This is taking the engaged bodhisattva vows.

Verse 3.24 is saying, “I generate the aspirational mind of enlightenment *and* the engaged mind of enlightenment and likewise, I shall also abide in the bodhisattva trainings.”

One can take the bodhisattva vows from a master who has the vows. If not, one can take the vows in the presence of a visualised field of merit. In the presence of the field of merit, one adopts bodhicitta using these two paragraphs.

In these two paragraphs, in terms of the words of the ritual here, one is adopting *both*

aspirational bodhicitta and engaged bodhicitta in one go.

I have a question myself, “When you receive the vows in your continuum, do you first receive the aspirational bodhicitta vows that comes with a commitment followed by the engaged bodhisattva vows or are these two received at the same time? When you receive these vows in your continuum, do you receive them at the same time or sequentially?”

In the lam-rim literature, these two are adopted sequentially. When one is able to handle the commitments, first one adopts the aspirational bodhicitta vows that come with a commitment. Subsequently when one feels that one can practise the perfections, the deeds of the bodhisattva, only then does one take the engaged bodhisattva vows. This is clear in the lam-rim literature. One takes these vows sequentially.

But when you look at the words of the ritual here in Verses 3.23 and 3.24, both the aspirational bodhisattva vows with a commitment and the engaged bodhisattva vows are taken at the same time in one ritual.

My question is, “When you receive the vows, are they received sequentially or are they received simultaneously?” This is my question.

“And likewise I shall learn the trainings according to the stages”: One has to train in the bodhisattva deeds in stages. For example, the practice of dedicating and giving one’s body, when one is an ordinary person on an ordinary path, that practice is only done mentally. When one abides on the grounds, it is said that one would then be able to give away one’s body without any difficulty. It is a fault and a mistake to actually give away one’s body when one is not ready. But when one is ready, for instance, when one is abiding on the bodhisattva grounds, the teachings say that the bodhisattvas are able to give away their bodies as easily as someone giving away a plate of vegetables to someone else.

Here we are talking about the practice of a generous attitude and the practice of increasing that attitude. The practice of increasing the generous attitude is to reduce our miserliness. When we reach a point where there is no miserliness in the mind, then giving away everything including the body will be easy.

### **CONCLUDING ACTIONS**

After adopting the vows, there is the conclusion whereby you rejoice after having adopted bodhicitta and you cause others to rejoice also.

*Cultivating joy oneself*

~ *Cultivating joy by uplifting the mind*

Verse 3.25

Those intelligent ones have concluded lucidly seizing  
The mind of enlightenment in this way,

But, in order to increase it,  
They should highly praise it in the following manner:

Verse 3.26

Now my life is fruitful.  
I have attained a good human existence,  
Today I have been born in the buddha lineage.  
I have become a child of the Buddha.

It is important to rejoice in the benefits of bodhicitta by reflecting on the benefits of bodhicitta prior to generating bodhicitta. After one has generated bodhicitta, it is also very important to rejoice in the fact that one has generated bodhicitta. It is important to uplift the mind after one has generated bodhicitta.

“Now my life is fruitful./ I have attained a good human existence”: “At this time while I am still alive, I have had this opportunity to generate bodhicitta and take the vows. This is something very meaningful.”

You have to reflect on this on your own after taking the bodhisattva vows, “This is really something very meaningful especially at this time when I have this precious human rebirth. Due to generating bodhicitta, I have now become a child of the victorious ones.”

This is rejoicing. Next is meditating on conscientiousness.

~ *Having found that mind, meditating on conscientiousness*

Verse 3.27

Now whatever happens,  
I will act to not sully  
This flawless, holy buddha lineage,  
Initiating actions concordant with this lineage.

You should think, “After having taken the bodhisattva vows, whatever I do, I will make all my actions harmonious and concordant with the buddha lineage.” This means, “Whatever I do, I am doing it for the benefit of all sentient beings.”

This verse is also saying, “After taking the bodhisattva vows, as much as possible, in whatever I do, I will not do it for selfish reasons and, as much as possible, I will not allow myself to be stained by the bodhisattva downfalls and faults.” The teachings are telling you that in whatever you do, as far as possible:

- do it with the thought of benefiting others
- make sure that your actions are not mixed with personal interest and selfish purposes
- be conscientious in checking whether you are committing any of the downfalls and faults of the bodhisattva vows

The main thing is that after taking the bodhisattva vows, we should continually rely on mindfulness and introspection (or vigilance) to make sure that whatever we do,

we do it with the thought of benefiting others and to make sure, as much as possible, that it is not done because of our self-cherishing attitude.

~ *Cultivating joy by gaining the mind that is difficult to find*

Next we rejoice by thinking how we have found something that is very rare.

Verse 3.28

Just like a blind man

Discovering a jewel in a heap of rubbish,

Likewise by some coincidence

This mind of enlightenment has been born within me.

This verse says that taking the bodhisattva vows is as rare as a blind man finding treasure in a rubbish bin. When you think about this, you can see that it is very true because as ordinary individuals, our minds are completely filled with the garbage that is our afflictions, the three mental poisons, in addition to the great demon that is our self-cherishing attitude.

Despite this, we now have this opportunity to reflect on bodhicitta, to generate bodhicitta and to take the bodhisattva vows. This is indeed very rare. We have been able to reflect and think of bodhicitta and take the bodhisattva vows due to the power of our merit and the power of our virtuous friend. It is as if something that is an impossibility has become possible.

This is rejoicing by understanding the rarity of such an occurrence. When we actualise bodhicitta, bodhicitta will fulfil all our own wishes. It will also enable us to fulfil the wishes of others. The next few verses are rejoicing in this fact.

*The accomplishment of others' welfare*

~ *Destroying the lord of death*

Verse 3.29 a,b

This is also the supreme ambrosia

That overcomes the lord of death of migrating beings.

Bodhicitta can overcome the lord of death. With bodhicitta, when one shows and teaches the path to sentient beings, they can be placed in the undying state, i.e., the state of full enlightenment. Bodhicitta is like the nectar that bestows this undying state.

Bodhicitta can also stop untimely death. In most cases, when you think about it, untimely death is caused by the self-cherishing attitude so when one has bodhicitta, one will be able to avoid untimely deaths.

~ *Destroying poverty*

Bodhicitta also destroys the experience of poverty of sentient beings.

Verse 3.29 c,d



This is also the inexhaustible treasure  
That eliminates all poverty of migrating beings.

When one achieves the eighth ground, one achieves mastery or control over many things including mastery over life, mastery over possessions and so forth. A bodhisattva on the eighth ground is said to possess innumerable resources like the sky treasury with which they can eliminate the poverty of sentient beings. Such mastery over resources possessed by the eighth ground bodhisattvas is due to their bodhicitta.

~ *Destroying disease*

Bodhicitta can also eliminate the diseases or sicknesses of sentient beings.

Verse 3.30a,b

This is the supreme medicine  
That quells the disease of migrating beings too.

In medical literature, it is mentioned that there are 404 kinds of diseases that are caused by the three mental poisons and that can be generally classified into three classes of disorders:

1. Wind disorders related to the subtle energies of the body that are also called *lung* is said to arise from bewilderment or ignorance.
2. Disorders related to bile arise from anger.
3. Disorders related to phlegm arise from attachment.

The 404 diseases are divided into:

- 101 diseases that do not last for a long time
- 101 diseases that are related to karma
- 101 diseases that are related to spirit interferences
- 101 diseases affecting the life force

These 404 diseases have their source in the three mental poisons. The bodhisattvas overcome these diseases by meditating on love and so forth. The bodhisattvas also pacify these diseases that sentient beings experience by giving them teachings on love, on the twelve links of dependent origination and on, say, ugliness, in order to help them overcome the mental poisons that are the source of these 404 diseases. This is how bodhicitta can destroy the diseases of sentient beings.

~ *Destroying in general the sufferings of samsara*

Next is how bodhicitta can destroy the sufferings of samsara in general and specifically how bodhicitta can destroy the sufferings of the lower realms.

Verse 3.30 c,d

It is the tree of rest for migrating beings  
Wandering and weary on the path of conditioned existence.

This shows how bodhicitta destroys the sufferings of samsara in general. Since bodhisattvas have to work for the welfare of others, it is stated in the teachings that

bodhisattvas should train in the paths of the hearers and solitary realisers. The bodhisattvas then work for the benefit of the hearers and solitary realisers by helping them achieve their respective enlightenments, i.e., the bodhisattvas help those who are weary in samsara by showing them the paths of the hearers and solitary realisers.

Depending on the power of their bodhicitta, bodhisattvas show some sentient beings the paths of the hearers and solitary realisers, enabling them to liberate themselves from samsara and achieve the enlightenments of the hearers and solitary realisers.

~ *Destroying specifically the sufferings of the lower realms* Verse 3.31 a,b

It is the universal platform that leads all migrating beings  
To freedom from the bad migrations.

Bodhisattvas show the persons of small capacity how to accomplish virtue by showing them what they need to adopt and what they need to abandon. In doing so, they protect these sentient beings from falling into the lower realms. All this happens due to their bodhicitta.

~ *The potential to dispel the obscurations, the causes of suffering*

Bodhicitta is said to eliminate both the afflictive obscurations and the knowledge obscurations.

Verse 3.31c,d

It is the dawning moon of the mind  
That dispels the torment of afflictions of migrating beings.

This shows that bodhicitta eliminates the afflictive obscurations.

Verse 3.32

It is the great sun that annihilates  
The cataracts of ignorance of migrating beings.

This shows that bodhicitta can eliminate also the knowledge obscurations.

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#### **MEDICINE BUDDHA RETREAT IN KOPAN IN OCT 2014**

*Khen Rinpoche: This is a short announcement.*

*I think probably many of you know that we are organising a retreat in Kopan in October. This retreat will last about eight days. I did this retreat two years ago and we are going to do the same thing again.*

*The idea is to do the retreat in Kopan. The goal is to generate a peaceful mind. We will not do so much recitation but mainly we will give you time to meditate. Probably in one day we will have six hours in which to meditate. Each session will be*

*one hour, not too long and we will break the day into six sessions. Probably that will be easy.*

*Last time I did that and some people requested that we do this Medicine Buddha retreat again. This is why I am organising this retreat in Kopan again.*

*Probably you all know that this retreat will be a silent retreat for eight days. Remember that the discipline is to be silent for eight days. Remember that. People who had done this retreat last time said they enjoyed it and liked it. If they said they didn't like it, I don't think I would organise this retreat again.*

*These people said they liked it. Many people thought they couldn't be silent for eight days. They thought it would be impossible but something they thought would be impossible became possible for them. They said it was OK and they enjoyed it.*

*I think the silence makes a difference. When you go for retreat, the feeling is different when you are in silence, especially when you switch off your TV, your mobile, your computer and your iPad!*

*I suggest that you do not use these devices during the retreat unless you have an emergency. Then that is different. Otherwise, I suggest you try to cut down for one week and see how you find this new experience during your meditation.*

*The basic idea is keeping silent. This means that your mind will be silent. Everyone has to be silent. There is nothing to do there since you are in the monastery. So that is the idea.*

*Basically we are trying something new, looking for some kind of peace, some kind of happiness, some kind of experience. Once you find some peaceful and happy feeling, of course that is good. This will encourage you to do more.*

*This is something I'm trying to do here in this retreat. Because here [in Singapore] with this busy life, I think there is no time for meditation. Even now when we try to do this lam-rim meditation in the morning, it is not easy. When you sit down, your mind is not sitting still but thinking, "I need to do this, ...this, ...and this." It is not easy.*

*I feel that sometimes you really need to just leave all this behind and go on holiday for one week. Really leave everything behind and go to a different place and forget all these things. Then you do not have to think, "I have to do this, that and the other."*

*Even for myself, it makes a difference. When you really get out (of Singapore) and especially when you go for retreat, then that becomes like your job and your mind becomes more focussed.*

*Also this is a group retreat so there is some kind of energy there. Everybody is doing the same thing. Everybody is silent. Everybody is trying to do a good thing. Everybody is sitting very straight. (Laughter). There is always some kind of encouragement. So it is good to do retreat with a group.*

*During the break time, for those of you who have not been to Kopan, the place is big. You can walk around, go around the stupa and go around the gumpa. You can do walking and at the same time you can chant the mantra of Medicine Buddha. If you think your mouth is not moving, then you can chant as loud as possible. (Laughter). You think your mouth is itchy then you chant the mantra. I am just kidding.*

*Anyway those who wish to go to the retreat can sign up for it. I understand that people don't have much time so you have to choose what you want to do. You want to go here, here, and here but you can't go everywhere. So you have to choose where you wish to go.*

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