

**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 20**15 April 2014**

Review. Chapter Five: Guarding Introspection. Verses 5.4-5.11. A. An extensive explanation of the way to practice. 1. The method for guarding the trainings: guarding the mind. A. By guarding the mind, one comes to guard all. B. The reasons for that. 1. Wrongdoing depends upon the mind. 2. Qualities depend upon the mind.

REVIEW

We saw earlier how in order to protect one's ethics one has to guard one's mind. Without guarding one's mind, there is no way to guard one's ethics. Therefore guarding one's mind is very important. The text tells us that when we guard or protect our mind well, we cannot be harmed by the external enemy.

When our minds are stirred by the waves of incorrect mental attention, the appearance of an external enemy arises which acts as a condition for the inner enemy, the afflictions such as anger and attachment, to arise. When this inner enemy, the afflictions, arises, what does it do to us? It kills us.

The essential point here is that the main enemy is the inner enemy, i.e., the afflictions. We have to subdue the mind. When we discipline and subdue our mind, there is no external enemy, as the external enemy cannot harm us. On the basis of recognising the faults of the afflictions, we have to strive to destroy them.

The text tells us that when we let our minds be stirred up by the waves of incorrect mental attention, when the afflictions arise, the harm they bring is very, very great as they can throw us into the lowest of the lower realms, the Avici hells. This harm that is inflicted by the inner enemy is something that the external enemy cannot do to us.

Here we are discussing the application of mindfulness and introspection (or vigilance). In this context, what should we be mindful of and what should we apply introspection to? We should have mindfulness and introspection with regard to the things we need to cultivate and the things we need to abandon. When we are able to apply constantly mindfulness and introspection with regard to the things we need to cultivate, it is said that the cultivation of virtue will be easy.

Let us take the ethics of abandoning the ten non-virtues as an example. Before we can apply mindfulness and introspection in cultivating the ethics of abandoning the ten non-virtues, we need:

- first, to know what the ten non-virtues are;

- second, to recognise their individual entities;
- third, to understand how these ten non-virtues are created and;
- finally, to know exactly how to abandon the ten non-virtues.

Without knowing these few points, there is no way we can apply mindfulness as mindfulness is not forgetting something that we already know. If we do not know exactly what the ten non-virtues are, their entities, how to engage them, how to turn away from them and so forth, we cannot apply mindfulness so we cannot say that we are mindful in abandoning the ten non-virtues. Therefore we have to know these points.

Similarly, in order to keep whatever pratimoksha vows we have taken, first we have to know the trainings involved before we can be mindful of them.

Similarly, in order to protect our bodhisattva vows, we have to know what the bodhisattva vows are, and in order to keep our tantric vows, we have to know what the tantric vows consist of.

Here we are discussing the practice of mindfulness and introspection in relation to the practice of ethics. There are different kinds of ethics:

- the ethics of the pratimoksha vows
- the ethics of the bodhisattva vows
- the ethics of the tantric vows

Whatever vows we may be referring to, before we can protect and guard these vows well with mindfulness and introspection, first we have to know what the vows are.

The ethics we are discussing here is primarily the ethics of the bodhisattvas, which can be classified into three types:

1. the ethics of restraint
2. the ethics of gathering virtuous dharma
3. the ethics of benefiting sentient beings

The teachings state that these three types of ethics constitute the ethics of the bodhisattvas. In order to protect these ethics, first we have to know what they are and on that basis, we have to strive to protect them.

Acharya Shantarakshita said that because of apprehending things to be truly existent, this acts as the condition for afflictions such as anger and attachment to arise. Through apprehending things to be truly existent (or inherently existent), the inner enemy of anger and attachment arises. When this grasping at things to be truly existent ceases, when it no longer exists, then there is no way for anger and attachment to arise. Therefore the great master Shantarakshita said, “The root or source of all the problems is the belief in things to be truly existent.” This apprehension of true existence, the ignorance that grasps at a self, is the root of all our problems. When that ignorance is destroyed, there is no way for the inner enemy of anger and attachment to arise. When there is no inner enemy, there will not be any external enemy either.

The appearance of the external enemy very much depends on having anger. From the view of anger, there is a projection of the external enemy, “This person harmed me.”

Without hatred or anger, there will not be an external enemy. The external enemy does not exist from its own side, i.e., it does not exist inherently. Rather it is a product or projection of one's inner enemy. It is said that when the inner enemy does not exist, there will be no external enemy. Therefore the teachings emphasise the need to subdue our own mind.

When one thinks, "No matter how I subdue my mind, there is no way to stop these external problems and conditions. There are so many of them. So it doesn't really matter whether I subdue my mind or not because the problems are still there." One will not be able to protect oneself when one thinks in this way. The answer to that is in verses 5.4 and 5.5.

THE METHOD FOR GUARDING THE TRAININGS: GUARDING THE MIND (cont'd)

A. *By guarding the mind, one comes to guard all*

3. *The benefits of guarding the mind*

B. *Extensive explanation*

Verse 5.4

Tigers, lions, elephants, bears,
Snakes, and all my enemies,
The guardians who are hell beings,
Evil spirits and likewise cannibals,

Verse 5.5

Will all be bound
By binding this mind alone,
And will all be subdued
By subduing this mind alone.

Harm comes from all the different kinds of animals—tigers, lions, elephants, bears, snakes and so forth—all our human enemies, all the hell guardians, all the people who do black magic to harm us, all the different kinds of blood-drinking spirits and so forth. When we are able to tie our mind with mindfulness and introspection to a virtuous object of observation, such as compassion and bodhicitta, all these harms from animals, humans and non-humans will not be able to affect us.

We are afraid of these things. When we see animals, we are afraid of being harmed by them. We are afraid of being harmed by humans, non-humans and so forth. When we analyse this further, this fear comes from our self-cherishing. The greater is our self-cherishing, the greater will be our worries and fears.

In place of self-cherishing, when we have the strong thought of cherishing others—in particular when there is compassion and bodhicitta—although that will not make the animal go away, even if the animal is still there, from our side, we will not experience fear. Even when we meet with frightening animals such as poisonous snakes and so forth, when there is the strong thought of benefiting others, they will not frighten us. Why is this so? Because when there is the strong thought of benefiting others, the mind is very stable, calm and relaxed.

Khen Rinpoche: If you just sit there, maybe the lion will eat you. Then how? What will you do? You have to stay calm, generate the bodhicitta mind and you remain there. When the lion comes in front of you, will it eat you? Maybe it won't eat you. I am not sure. Maybe the lion can smell, "Oh this not the right person to eat because she doesn't have self-cherishing. I only like to eat people who have self-cherishing!"

In such a situation, whether one is eaten or not, putting aside that, when there is a really strong thought of benefiting others and one is accustomed to that, then definitely from one's own side, one has no fear and no worry.

There are many historical accounts of bodhisattvas who have generated real bodhicitta. When they come into contact with wild animals, because of their real bodhicitta, the wild animals are naturally pacified and subdued and stay by their side. Those who have real bodhicitta are able to subdue the minds of others. I guess this is one explanation of the symbolism behind certain buddhas and bodhisattvas depicted as sitting on lions or having snakes as a hood covering their holy bodies.

This is why the teachings say that when our minds are subdued, we are able to subdue everything. Wherever these real bodhisattvas go, when people come into their presence, somehow they are naturally pacified. Because of their powerful bodhicitta, everything around them is pacified and becomes very calm.

What follows is the explanation for what has been mentioned so far, the reasons for that, and this has two parts:

1. Wrongdoing depends upon the mind.
2. Qualities depend upon the mind.

Wrongdoing depends on the mind is discussed under three points.

- A. Scripture
- B. Reasoning
- C. Synopsis

B. The reasons for that

1. *Wrongdoing depends upon the mind*

A. Scripture

Verse 5.6

The perfect speech itself indicated,

"Thus all fears

As well as all boundless suffering

Originate from the mind."

It is said that, "All fears/ As well as all boundless suffering/ Originate from the mind." The fears of this life and future lives arise from the negative mind.

Where is this stated? What is the source? In the *Sutra of the Clouds of Jewels*, the Buddha said, "If one controls one's mind, one controls all phenomena."

Next is establishing this through reasoning.

B. Reasoning

Verse 5.7

Who intentionally created
The weapons of hell beings?
Who created the burning iron ground?
From what did all those hosts of women ensue?

Verse 5.8 a, b

The Muni taught that all such things
Are the negative mind.

It is explained that in the hells, there are hell guardians who wield different kinds of weapons such as swords and spears. Who created these weapons? These were not created by an all-mighty creator god.

Who created the burning iron grounds in the hell realms? The creator is again not someone else.

Similarly, who created the surrounding hells? There is a surrounding hell that has a tree called the shalmali tree that is as big as a mountain. From the vicinity of that tree, one hears the cries of women. Who created that? The beings who are born in that particular hell hear the cries of their objects of attachment. In this case, the objects of attachment are women. These beings hear the cries of the women they were attached to. They hear the women calling out to them from the top of these trees. Due to their attachment, they climb up the trees looking for their women. As they climb up the trees, they are pierced by all kinds of swords. Then when they reach the top of the trees, they hear the women calling for them from the foot of the trees. Again they climb down the trees looking for the source of the cries of those women that they were attached to.

Who is the creator of all this suffering? It is not created by someone else, nor is it generated without cause. All this suffering is the result of one's own negative mind.

There are people who are not well-trained in logic and reasoning and there are people who deny the workings of karma, the law of cause and its effects. We may tell them that when humans see liquid, they see it as water, but hungry ghosts see the same liquid as pus and blood. Our explanation to them is that this is due to karma. The hungry ghosts are unable to partake of the pus and blood because this is what they see.

But these people who are not skilled in logic and reasoning and who deny the workings of cause and effect will say, "If you say that there is really pus and blood because that is what the hungry ghosts see, then the same must also appear to me as a human being."

Our reply is this, "There is no contradiction. You think, 'This appearance of pus and blood is an appearance to the mind of the hungry ghosts but, in actuality, there is no pus and blood because if the pus and blood that appear to the hungry ghosts really

exist, they would have to appear to a human being too.’ You have to understand that you are wrong.

“You are wrong because when you assert that, you would also have to deny the existence of the hell fires since the hell fires are experienced by only certain beings. Therefore since they do not exist for you, in actuality, there is no hell and there are no hell fires. When you think in this way, at the end of the day, basically you are denying the workings of karma.

“What we see as water is seen by the gods as nectar, but we do not see nectar. If we were to argue and say that that nectar does not exist because we do not see the nectar, then we would also have to say that the water that appears to us does not exist.”

Khen Rinpoche: Are you getting the line of reasoning or not?

The point is this. When you say, “Pus and blood are just an appearance to the negative minds of the pretas. They do not really exist.”, when you phrase it in such a way, then you are actually deprecating the workings of karma and its effects.

Why is that line of thinking wrong? Because this line of thinking is coming from our human prejudice—that if it exists, humans must see it. It must appear to a human for it to exist. This is the prejudice. At the end of the day, it goes back to oneself, “Because I don’t see it, therefore it doesn’t exist.” The whole line of reasoning goes back to that point.

Khen Rinpoche: Yes or no?

We humans see a bowl of liquid that is wet and moist as water. Our strong karma causes us to have this appearance of water and for us, that bowl of liquid exists as water. But for the hungry ghosts, that same bowl of liquid appears as pus and blood. Due to their strong karma, for them, it is established as pus and blood.

From the side of the liquid, the liquid is neither established as water nor pus and blood. For the gods, because of their pure karma, the bowl of liquid appears as nectar. This appearance of nectar to the gods is due to their own karma and their merit. If that bowl of liquid is established as nectar by its own nature, from its own side, then whoever sees that bowl of liquid would see nectar.

Everything that exists in the hells—all the different frightening appearances such as the weapons wielded by the hell guardians, the burning iron grounds and so forth—are not created by somebody else. They are all created by one’s negative mind. If one created the karma, which is basically the creation of one’s own mind, then there are these appearances of all these frightening images. There doesn’t have to be real fires existing from their own side. But due to the negative karma created by one’s mind, there is a projection of the appearance of all these fires, burning iron grounds and so forth.

Even though they do not exist from their own side as real fires and so forth,

nevertheless, these appearances torment the mind. One goes through the experiences of being burnt, harmed, pierced and so forth. It does not mean that because they are mere appearances to one's negative mind, therefore they cannot function. Although they are mere appearances to one's negative mind, the creations of one's negative mind, nevertheless, they function to cause problems, suffering and pain.

We may fall asleep and dream of being trapped in a building that is on fire. We may even dream that we are burnt by the fire. Although it is just a dream, there are all these appearances to the dream consciousness. Nevertheless, in the dream, you experience fear and pain. You may even wake up sweating all over. You could say that it was just a mere appearance to the mind but, nevertheless, that mere appearance does cause suffering.

Mere appearances can function to generate fear. This analogy of a dream fire should only be used to illustrate that mere appearances can function to cause fear and suffering. But that analogy *cannot* be used to arrive at the conclusion that the dream fire is the same as the hell fires because they are not the same. The dream fire does not exist but the hell fires do exist. This is something that requires deeper analysis.

When you think more deeply about this, what is the difference between the dream fire and the hell fires? Of course when you do think about it, you will get a headache! What is the difference then?

When you think about it, this is what you would probably end up saying, "Just as the dream fire is a mere appearance to the dream consciousness, the hell fires, hell guardians, weapons and so forth are just mere appearances to the negative mind." Therefore these hell fires, hells and so forth are not as real as they are described in the texts. They are actually just mere appearances to the negative mind.

Is there any problem if you were to say this? If you were to say that there is no problem, that this is the conclusion, it follows that there are no hell fires and so forth. If there are no hell fires, it follows that there are also no hells. If there are no hells, then of course, there cannot be any hungry ghosts.

It is not easy to posit the existence of something. What is the criterion for determining whether something exists or not? How do you posit whether something exists or not?

For all the tenet systems below the Consequence Middle Way School (CMWS)— from the Autonomy Middle Way School (AMWS) and below—whether something exists or not is determined by whether there is a valid cogniser realising that object or not.

However, for the CMWS, existence is posited as a mere appearance.

If you were to ask someone who has the world view of the AMWS and the tenets below that this question, "Why is it that a human being doesn't have horns? Why is it that cows have horns?", the answer they will give you is this, "because you can see that one does not have horns and the other has horns." This answer is basically

saying that the presence or absence of horns is determined by whether there is a valid mind cognising the horns or not. This is how it is determined that cows have horns and humans do not have horns.

How do you validate the existence of horns? Through there being a mind that realises horns. But when you consider their answer, what are they driving at? To them, the horns exist right there from their own side. This is the very crux and basis of all their views: there is something right there from its own side. This very ‘existence from its own side’ is the number one target that is negated by the CMWS. Whatever is asserted by everybody else, this becomes the object of negation that is refuted by the CMWS.

According to the Prasangikas,¹ what is a horn? A horn is none other than that which is posited by convention. The Prasangikas say the fact that a human does not have horns and a cow has horns is posited conventionally, i.e., through convention. That’s it. But a human not having horns and a cow having horns are the same in that they do not exist from their own side.

The CMWS states that while phenomena are posited conventionally, they are mere appearances. Even though phenomena are mere appearances posited through mere names and labels, nevertheless, they function. According to the CMWS, although all phenomena are mere appearances, nevertheless they function, e.g., a dream fire can cause fear and worry. Likewise, all these appearances—the weapons, the burning iron grounds, the hell fires and so forth—are mere appearances to the negative mind. Nevertheless, they function to cause pain, worries and fear.

There is a difference between a dream fire and a hell fire. You have to posit that there is a difference. The dream fire is posited not to exist and the hell fire is posited to exist but both are posited conventionally.

We have to think, “What is the difference between? Why is it that the dream fire does not exist? Why is it that the hell fires exist?”

Khen Rinpoche: What do you think? Do the hell fires exist or not? Why?

The point is this: Although the hell fires are mere appearances to the negative mind, nevertheless, hell fires exist. They cause pain, fear and suffering. Therefore it is important to protect the mind.

C. Synopsis

Verse 5.8 c, d

Hence, within the three worlds

There is nothing to fear other than my own mind.

All the fears contained in the three worlds—the desire realms, form realms and the formless realms—arise from the negative mind.

¹ The proponents of the Consequence Middle Way School.

So this is the section explaining how all faults arise from the mind.

Next is an explanation of how all qualities depend on the mind. There are six points:

- A. Giving relies upon the mind
- B. Ethics relies upon the mind
- C. Patience relies upon the mind
- D. Joyous effort relies upon the mind
- E. Concentration relies upon the mind
- F. Wisdom relies upon the mind

2. *Qualities depend upon the mind*

A. *Giving relies upon the mind*

1. *Completing the perfection of giving does not depend upon eliminating all types of poverty amongst all migrators*

Verse 5.9

If the perfection of generosity

Were the alleviation of migrating beings' poverty,

Then since there are still starving migrating beings,

In what manner did the previous Protectors perfect it?

Why is there such a fallacy? Because if the perfection of generosity is contingent on removing all poverty and since poverty still exists in abundance, it follows that all the buddhas of the past have not perfected the perfection of generosity.

The perfection of generosity is the cultivation of the mind of giving that is brought to its fulfilment.

2. *It is brought to completion by familiarising oneself with the attitude of generosity*

Verse 5.10

The perfection of generosity is taught to be

The mind intending to give all things,

As well as its result, to all beings;

Hence it is simply the mind.

The completion of the perfection of generosity is said to be the complete habituation of the mind of giving that gives away one's body, resources and roots of virtue together with their results, i.e., the merit from such giving.

One trains in this generous attitude, the mind that is willing and able to give up everything—one's body, resources and roots of virtue—including the effects of such giving, the merit. One gives all this away to all sentient beings without any miserliness and attachment.

When one is thoroughly habituated with this attitude, this is said to be the completion of the perfection of generosity. Therefore the completion of the perfection of generosity is contingent on the mind itself and not on external factors or the external situation. You bring this habituation of giving to completion by bringing it to its highest level. You bring this generous attitude to its highest level

through becoming thoroughly habituated with it. This is said to be the perfection of generosity.

Generosity has to be understood to be a state of mind and it is defined as a generous attitude. The completion of the perfection of generosity is bringing that generous attitude to completion through habituation.

Next is the perfection of ethics (or ethical discipline) that is also a quality that is dependent on the mind. The completion of the perfection of ethics does not depend on the absence of a sentient being that one could kill.

B. Ethics relies upon the mind

1. *It is invalid to say that completing the perfection of ethics depends upon the exhaustion of all sentient beings to kill*

Verse 5.11 a,b

Where will the fish and so forth be driven
So that they will not be killed?

If the perfection of ethics is posited as removing all the sentient beings that you can kill to a safe place where they cannot be touched by anyone, you will never be able to find a place for everyone where they will not be killed.

If the mind of abandonment is brought to completion through familiarisation, this is posited as the perfection of ethics. You do not want to kill and you think, “No matter what happens, I will not kill. I will not physically harm others even at the cost of my life.” This is ethics. Is this not a mind of abandonment?

Similarly you think, “It does not matter what happens. I will not take what is not given. I will not steal.” This is a mind of abandonment and this is ethics. Such a mind of abandonment is brought to completion through constant familiarisation that is posited as the perfection of ethics.

You may encounter a situation where you have a choice whether to kill or not. You restrain yourself, thinking, “I will not kill. This is not good and I will not do it.” This is ethics. Just doing nothing and not killing anything is not posited to be ethics, i.e., a mind that has the attitude of abandonment. When this mind of abandonment is brought to completion through constant familiarisation, then this is the completion of the perfection of ethics.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR SUNDAY, 27TH APRIL 2014

1. (a) What is the manner of rejoicing?  
(b) How does one accumulate merit when rejoicing in the virtue of others?
2. The Buddha has conquered the four maras including the mara of death. The Buddha is also omniscient and knows the wishes and dispositions of all sentient beings. What then is the purpose of requesting the Buddha not to pass into parinirvana and to turn the wheel of Dharma?

3. It is said that conventional bodhicitta destroys both the afflictive obscurations and the knowledge obscurations. How is this done?
4. (a) After generating bodhicitta, why is it inappropriate to give up bodhicitta?  
(b) What happens when one gives up the bodhicitta that has been generated?
5. (a) What are the faults of the afflictions?  
(b) When they arise, how are we harmed by them?

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