

**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 29****29 May 2014**

Chapter Five: Verses 5.94 - 5.109. **3.** The way to train in the conduct of guarding the mind by means of mindfulness and introspection (cont'd). **C.** The way to train in the ethics of working for the benefit of sentient beings. **3.** Looking after the minds of sentient beings and training in the conduct that is unsullied by wrongdoing. **4.** The branch or method of excellent trainings. **B.** The conclusion, as it is necessary to put into practice the meaning without leaving it on the level of mere words.

*Question:* In the *Lam Rim Chen Mo*, it is mentioned that at the time of death, attachment to a self does not occur among non-returners, but stream-enterers and once-returners are not mentioned. Non-returners will never be reborn in the desire realm so why do they not have this attachment to a self at the time of death? What makes them so different from the stream-enterers and once-returners?

*Khen Rinpoche:* For non-returners, they do not have to come back so they do not need this attachment. If you want to come back, then you need this attachment. You don't want to come back, then you do not need this attachment.

*Question:* Do non-returners still take rebirth due to karma and delusions?

*Khen Rinpoche:* Being a non-returner mean that they do not need to come back. You don't want to come back to Singapore so you do not need a visa!

*Question:* But do they take rebirth? If they still take rebirth, what makes them so special?

*Khen Rinpoche:* They do *not* take rebirth in the desire realm. Being a non-returner means that he or she does not come back to, i.e., take rebirth in, the desire realm anymore.

*Question:* Not taking rebirth in the desire realm means that they will not take rebirth with an attachment to the self?

*Khen Rinpoche:* In the presentation of the Hinayana path of the hearers and solitary realisers, there are four types of superiors: (1) stream-enterers, (2) once-returners, (3) non-returners and (4) foe destroyers.

The non-returners will never ever be reborn again in the desire realm due to karma and afflictions.

According to the lower *Abidharmakosha*, stream-enterers and once-returners are Hinayana superiors as they have achieved the arya path but nevertheless, they still have to take rebirth in the desire realm. As for the non-returners, because they have abandoned the manifest afflictions of the desire realm, therefore they do not take rebirth in the desire realm due to karma and afflictions. Non-returners do not have the craving that will nourish the karma to be reborn in the desire realm.

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### 3. THE WAY TO TRAIN IN THE CONDUCT OF GUARDING THE MIND BY MEANS OF MINDFULNESS AND INTROSPECTION (cont'd)

- C. *The way to train in the ethics of working for the benefit of sentient beings*
3. *Looking after the minds of sentient beings and training in the conduct that is unsullied by wrongdoing*
    - A. *Extensive explanation*
      2. *The way to act when the path and so forth are being sought*

Verse 5.94

I should not give directions with one finger,  
But instead indicate the way  
Respectfully with also  
All of my right arm.

Verse 5.95

Nor should I wildly wave my arms about;  
Instead I should make my point  
By uttering sounds with mild gestures and a snap of fingers.  
Otherwise I shall lose control.

If someone were to ask us for directions, we should point out the correct direction to him not just with one finger but respectfully with our right hand. The verse advises us to indicate the direction with a respectful attitude, both physically and verbally.

*Khen Rinpoche: I have a story of when I was in Dharamsala. Have I told you this before? I don't remember.*

*A long time ago, maybe around 1982, I was staying at Tushita in Dharamsala for two months doing what is called in Tibetan pen tsam. You would call it a retreat. What kind of retreat? I was in retreat just memorising text day and night. I needed to complete certain texts so I was memorising the whole day.*

*I was there for two months, around December and January, and at that time it was winter so it was quite cold there.*

*On one of the mornings, there was sunshine so I came out from my room. I sat outside the gompa and rested there because of the sunshine. It was around eight in the morning.*

*Then one English nun who I knew before brought a group of people, some Koreans or Chinese, I'm not sure, to Tushita. I was just sitting there under the sun. She was bringing these people and coming from behind me. I think she was looking for Ven. Roger.*

*She asked me, "Where is Ven. Roger's room?" Because I felt very cold and I didn't want to move as I wanted the sun ... (Khen Rinpoche pointed with his finger) ... I could see the room was nearby so I just pointed that that was the room.*

*She was so mad and upset. "You must stand up and show me the way!" Because you really could see that the room was just in front, I simply said, "That is the room." But somehow she was not pleased with that. Of course, I wasn't really helping. Also my problem was because I felt cold, I wanted to relax. So I just did this. (Khen Rinpoche pointed with one finger).*

*She became very upset and very unhappy for a long time. She did not want to talk to me and I also didn't talk to her. I didn't want to talk to her so it became like that. After one or two months, then things became OK. We became friends and we had dinner together.*

*Sometimes we can say it is partly our actions. Because I was not really helping. I was just sitting there, pointing. When you want to please a person, then you must stand in a respectful way and maybe bow down! Of course, then the person will be extremely pleased. "Venerable, this is the way. Welcome to Tushita." (Laughter).*

*But I didn't do that, so this was what happened.*

*When you are busy and feeling stressed, then someone asks you, "Where is the toilet?" Your action of pointing with one finger is not really pleasant. There is something wrong with pointing with this (index) finger. I don't know what this finger means.*

*Pointing with this finger is quite aggressive you know. When you are angry, you point like that (pointing with index finger) and not like that (pointing with thumb). When you are angry, you tend to point with the index finger, "You, you, you!" So the advice here is not to point with one finger.*

*I don't know the meaning of each finger. Who made up the meaning, I'm not sure. This means something (points to one finger), this means something (points to the next finger), this means something (points to the next finger), this means something (points to the last finger). Who created this idea, I don't know.*

*I don't know whether it is good or not good to tell this story. I am not sure.*

*My teacher who is now 90 years old came twice to Singapore. Once Angela (name of student) was cooking momos, dumplings with meat. He does take meat so she cooked these momos at my place and offered them to him.*

*After that, she asked my teacher, "How were the momos?" Then my teacher gestured like this (Khen Rinpoche extended his middle finger). I don't know what that gesture means.*

*After that I asked her and she said, "This is not a good sign."  
But my teacher didn't mean that. What he meant was, "It is not the best and not the worse. Just medium!" He gestured like this not only once. He kept saying and gesturing with his middle finger. Then she was laughing. She said it was not a good sign. He said that there was nothing wrong. Who made up this thing? He meant, "Not the best, just medium."*

Therefore it is best to use the whole hand with all the fingers extended. Then you don't have so many different meanings.

Essentially this verse is an advice to indicate directions to others with a respectful physical and verbal attitude so as not to cause non-faith to arise in the other person.

Verse 5.95 also indicates that when you are showing directions to people or trying to make a point, you should not wave your arms about wildly and speak too loudly. When there is a need to perform certain hand gestures to indicate the way, to attract attention and so forth, you can do so gently without waving the arms about wildly. When there is a need, you can even snap your fingers gently to attract attention.

If the person you are communicating with is within earshot, then there is no need for you to shout or speak loudly. When you do so, there is the possibility of causing disturbance to others. Of course it is a different matter if the person you are trying to communicate with is far away.

*Khen Rinpoche: Basically, it is saying, "Don't be kiasu!"<sup>1</sup> Sometimes when you go to a restaurant, you see some people who gesture nicely like this (raises his hand) but some other people wave wildly. Sometimes they even shout and clap their hands together. When others see such behaviour, such aggressive gestures, it does not look nice. If you were to behave like that, people will not feel that you are a good person. They will have this negative mind, "Oh, this person is like that." This is the idea.*

In short, these are advices to stop others from generating negative thoughts towards us. Also such behaviors or actions can be considered unacceptable. The discussion here is in the context of advice for the bodhisattvas. Bodhisattvas need to behave in a proper way because when they do not do so, some people may generate non-faith and be disturbed. Due to that, these people will fall into the lower realms.

### 3. *The way to lie down*

Verse 5.96

Just as the Protector lay down to pass away  
So should I lie in the desired direction,  
And first of all with introspection  
Make up my mind to quickly rise.

The advice here is for us to lie down adopting the posture of the Buddha when he displayed the deed of passing away into parinirvana. You should lie on your right side with your legs straight, resting your head on your right hand. You then place

<sup>1</sup> *Kiasu* is Singapore slang to describe someone who is afraid to lose out on anything.

your left hand on your body. Usually it is more uncomfortable somehow to lie on your right side rather than on your left.

*Khen Rinpoche: I noticed this myself. When I sleep this way (i.e., on the left side), it seems easier to fall asleep. It feels more comfortable. When I sleep this way (i.e. on the right side), it is not as comfortable.*

Anyway, it seems as if one does not feel as relaxed when lying on the right side.

*Do you have the same feeling? No? According to scientists it is because the tummy is on the left side. So when you sleep on the left side, your tummy is resting there and it feels more comfortable. When you sleep on the right side, your tummy is a little bit uncomfortable.*

I guess because of that, when we fall sleep lying on our right side, it does make a difference as we are better able to maintain our mindfulness and introspection. Our sleep does not become too deep with a sinking feeling. If we were to lie on our left side, we will be absorbed completely in sleep. Because it is so comfortable lying on our left side, our sleep becomes very heavy and this makes it very difficult for us to wake up. It is also said that such a posture leads to unpleasant dreams or nightmares.

So if you were to adopt the practice of lying on your right side, because the sleep is not completely relaxed, it will not be heavy and it will help you to maintain your mindfulness and introspection. There may also be fewer occurrences of bad dreams.

While you are lying down on your right side trying to fall asleep, the advice is that for as long as you are not asleep, you should maintain a virtuous state of mind and then let yourself fall asleep with this state of mind. At the time of falling asleep, you should also apply mindfulness and introspection to check whether any afflictions are manifest. If any afflictions are manifesting, you should try your best to make them go away and then try to fall asleep with a virtuous state of mind.

At the time of falling asleep, you should also bring to mind the idea of illumination, i.e., you should think of something that is bright and clear. This will also help in not having very deep sleep. And prior to falling asleep, you must also have the thought of wanting to wake up early the next morning.

We had seen in the module on the mind and its functions that sleep is a changeable mental factor. As such, when you are able to fall asleep with a virtuous state of mind, then the entire sleep becomes virtuous.

When we try to fall asleep whilst adopting the posture of the Buddha when he demonstrated the deed of passing away into parinirvana, thinking that was how the Buddha laid down when he passed away, there is the additional benefit of remembering the Buddha. When we remember the Buddha, we accumulate merit. It is said that when we are able to fall asleep while remembering the Buddha, we will not be subject to any harms, including harms from non-human entities.

There is this advice of conflating the four major periods in one's life—(1) when we are born, (2) when we are growing up, (3) when we are an adult and aging and (4) when we die—into a single day, i.e., these four major periods can be looked at from the perspective of one day.

- Waking up in the early morning is like a child being born.
- When you wake up and go to work, your working day is like the rest of your adult life.
- After a full day at work, you are tired and you come home to rest. This is like when you are old, perhaps in retirement.

*Khen Rinpoche: So night time is your old age.*

- On days when you are very tired, you just lie in bed, too tired to move; this is like a very sick old person on the verge of death.
- As you fall asleep, all the sense consciousnesses become dormant and dissolve. Only the mental consciousness remains. This is like dying and then ending up dead.
- During sleep, you have dreams. This dreaming state is likened to being in the intermediate state after you have died.
- Then the next morning when you wake up again, this is like taking on another rebirth and entering into a new life.

So even in one day you can look at it in terms of being born, living life, aging and then dying. Waking up fresh on a new day is actually like a new rebirth. Although you may feel that you are the same person, that everything is the same, actually yesterday has already passed and the person of today is a different person from the person of yesterday. The time and everything are different although you feel that they are the same.

Death in a sense is like sleeping because when you fall asleep, the gross elements and the gross consciousnesses dissolve and become dormant. But it is not as if the stream of consciousness is cut. The stream of consciousness is still there when you wake up the next day. Death is like that. In that sense perhaps there is nothing to fear about death as dying is like going to sleep.

During the time of dying, the grosser elements and the grosser consciousnesses dissolve. What is left in the end is the extremely subtle stream of consciousness that will move on to the next existence. You don't fear falling asleep. If you think about it in this way, perhaps there is also nothing much to fear about death itself. It is not as if you will go out of existence at the time of death.

After death, depending on the virtue or non-virtue that you have accumulated, you get either a good rebirth or a bad rebirth. Depending on the kind of rebirth you get, then there are all kinds of happiness to be experienced or suffering to be endured.

If you have lived your life practising the Dharma, cultivating the good heart or engaging in virtue, then there is nothing to fear about dying. If you have lived your

life like that, then dying is like falling asleep. Then you get another good rebirth. What you need to fear is when you have created non-virtue.

### B. Synopsis

Verse 5.97

From among the limitless deeds  
Of a bodhisattva that have been taught,  
I should certainly practice as much  
Of this conduct that trains the mind.

In general, when you look at the trainings of the bodhisattvas such as the six perfections and the four ways of gathering sentient beings into their fold, they are really extensive. In short, they are all instructions for modifying the behaviour of your body, speech and mind. Even if you cannot engage in these extensive trainings at the present time, you can train to modify your physical, verbal and mental behaviour as taught here in this text.

## 4. THE BRANCH OR METHOD OF EXCELLENT TRAININGS

### A. Extensive explanation

#### 1. The cause for purifying the trainings

Verse 5.98

Three times by day and three times by night  
I should recite *The Sutra of the Three Heaps*;  
By relying upon the Victors and the mind of enlightenment  
My remaining downfalls will be purified.

When we have taken the bodhisattva vows, we have to avoid committing the root downfalls and faults. When a root downfall occurs, we are supposed to confess to a person who holds the bodhisattva vows. After confessing, we should retake the bodhisattva vows. When a bodhisattva root downfall has occurred, we need to retake the vows to revive the vows.

When a secondary transgression or fault occurs, it says here that we should confess them through the recitation of *The Sutra of the Three Heaps*, commonly known as the *Confession of Downfalls to the 35 Buddhas*. What are the three heaps referred to in *The Sutra of the Three Heaps*? They are (1) confession, (2) rejoicing and (3) dedication.

When we are doing the *Confession to the 35 Buddhas*, we visualise the 35 Buddhas and in their presence, we go for refuge and generate bodhicitta. This constitutes the power of the foundation. In this practice, we confess our negativities and whatever downfalls and secondary transgression we have committed.

#### 2. The basis of the trainings

Verse 5.99

Whatever I do on any occasion,  
Whether in terms of myself or others,  
I should make effort and learn

Whatever training has been taught for that occasion.

When bodhisattvas engage in activities to accomplish their own purposes or the purposes of others, they have to do it through their body, speech and mind. So all activities engaged in with their body, speech and mind should be in accordance with what is taught in this text.

As we have seen so far, there are many advices given in this text pertaining to the kind of physical demeanour and attitude we should adopt, how we should speak and how we should think.

Verse 5.100

There is no such thing as something  
That is not learned by the Victors' Children.  
Thus if I am skilled in abiding in this way  
Nothing will be non-meritorious.

Bodhisattvas work for the benefit of others. In order to work for the benefit of others, they have to know many things; in fact, they have to know everything. There is nothing that the bodhisattvas should not learn. It is taught that the bodhisattvas have to know the paths of the hearers' and solitary realisers'. They also have to meditate on these paths. The reason is that the bodhisattvas also have to take care of the welfare of those who are of the lineage of the hearers and solitary realisers. In order to take care of and to help such people, the bodhisattvas have to know those paths before they can help them.

The bodhisattvas, in working for the benefit of others, need to learn and know everything that could possibly be known. Of course, they would do so with mindfulness and introspection. In fact, everything that the bodhisattvas do—including moving around, waving their hands, gesturing and so forth—is the cause for enlightenment and the cause for accomplishing the welfare of sentient beings. As such, the bodhisattvas accumulate great merit with everything they do. With mindfulness and introspection, the bodhisattvas are able to learn many things and use their knowledge to benefit sentient beings. It is said that the bodhisattvas are able to transform even actions that are usually non-virtuous into virtue.

In short, this verse is saying that because the bodhisattvas need to work for the benefit of all sentient beings, therefore they have to learn everything.

### 3. *The specifics*

#### A. *Dedicating virtues for the welfare of all sentient beings*

Verse 5.101

Directly or indirectly, I should not do anything  
Other than the welfare of sentient beings.  
Solely for the welfare of sentient beings  
I should dedicate all towards enlightenment.

Whether we are directly benefiting sentient beings through giving teachings or material gifts or we are engaging in our daily prayers while we are in retreat,



whatever virtue that is accumulated, we have to dedicate it to the welfare of sentient beings.

We are striving to accomplish the welfare of sentient beings only. Our efforts should be reflected in our dedication. When we are dedicating our roots of virtue, we pray and dedicate them to the achievement of complete enlightenment so that we can accomplish the welfare of sentient beings.

*B. One should never discard the spiritual master and the trainings of the Mahayana*

Verse 5.102

Never, even at the cost of my life,  
Should I forsake a spiritual friend  
Skilled in the meanings of the Mahayana  
[Who abides in] the supreme modes of conduct of a bodhisattva.

The lam-rim mentions clearly the qualifications of a Mahayana virtuous friend. You should know well what the qualifications of the Mahayana virtuous friend are as well as the necessary qualifications of a suitable disciple or student.

Many of you are familiar now with the topic of correctly devoting to the virtuous friend. We now should know:

1. the qualifications that the Mahayana virtuous friend should possess
2. the qualifications that the suitable student must possess
3. the benefits of correct reliance on such a teacher
4. the disadvantages you will experience when you make the mistake of giving up this relationship

Then next we come to the actual way of relying on the virtuous friends which has two points:

1. reliance in thought
2. reliance in action

Because there are so much benefit and profit when you rely correctly on the qualified Mahayana virtuous friend and because so many disadvantages and problems will ensue when you rely incorrectly on the qualified Mahayana virtuous friend, therefore, it says here, “Never, even at the cost of my life,/ Should I forsake a spiritual friend.”

*4. The basis one hears and reflects upon*

*A. Training in reliance upon the sutras*

Verse 5.103

I should train in devoting myself to my spiritual master  
In the manner taught in *The Biography of Shrisambhava*.  
This and other trainings spoken by the Buddha,  
I should understand through reading the sutras.

Verse 5.104

I should read the sutras  
Because it is in them that the practices appear.

To begin with, I should look at  
The *Sutra of Akashagarba*.

In the *Sutra of the Array of Stalks* there is an account of Shrisambhava asking the bodhisattva Lobsang, “How one should rely on the virtuous friend?” In this sutra, it is mentioned that there are nine attitudes of how a disciple should rely on the virtuous friend:

1. the attitude which is like a vajra
2. the attitude which is like a mountain
3. the attitude which is like a worldly servant
4. the attitude which is like a dog
5. the attitude which is like a dutiful child
6. the attitude which is like the earth
7. the attitude which is like a foundation
8. the attitude which is like a sweeper
9. the attitude which is like a boat

What attitude should you adopt in relying on the virtuous friend? Your attitude should be as unshakeable as a vajra. When you rely on your virtuous friend, it does not matter what kind of condition you meet, you never give up your virtuous friend.

In the course of relying on the virtuous friend you may meet with challenges and difficulties. Regardless of whatever conditions you may encounter, at those times, your attitude and your reliance on the virtuous friend should be as firm and as immovable as a mountain. You do not waver and you do not change.

Your attitude should also be like that of a worldly servant. Whatever work you are given, you do it without further negotiation. You should follow the advice and whatever jobs or tasks given by the guru.

You should be like a dog. If you were to scold your dog, it doesn’t get angry or retaliate but it looks at you happily. Likewise when relying on the virtuous friend, you should never get angry.

You should rely on a virtuous friend like an obedient or dutiful child. An obedient child follows exactly what the parents tell and advise him/her to do.

Verse 5.103 is indicating the attitudes that you should train in when relying on the virtuous friend. You should also be clear about the essential points of the training that you are going to engage in by referring to the source, the sutras.

The commentary says here that those who have taken the bodhisattva vows must definitely look at the *Sutra of Akashagarba*. The reason is that after you have taken the bodhisattva vows, you have to know what the root downfalls and the secondary transgressions are. The *Sutra of Akashagarba* is clear on that.

*B. Training in reliance upon the treatises*

Verse 5.105

I should definitely look at

*Compendium of Trainings* again and again  
Because what is to be constantly practiced  
Is clearly and extensively shown there.

*The Compendium of Trainings* was composed by Shantideva himself. He advises us to look at that text. As this text is quite elaborate, it is insufficient to look at it just once but it should be referred to again and again.

Verse 5.106  
Alternatively I should sometimes look at  
The condensed *Compendium of Sutras*.  
Also, I should make an effort to look at  
The second composed by Arya Nagarjuna.

Shantideva advises that alternatively we can also look at his condensed *Compendium of Sutras*. We should also look at the text with the same name composed by Arya Nagarjuna.

Shantideva and Nagarjuna both composed a text of the same name, the *Compendium of Sutras* but it seems that Shantideva's text has not been translated into the Tibetan language.

#### B. Conclusion

Verse 5.107  
I should do whatever  
Is not forbidden in those [works].  
I should impeccably practice whatever training I see  
In order to guard the minds of worldly people.

### B. THE CONCLUSION, AS IT IS NECESSARY TO PUT INTO PRACTICE THE MEANING WITHOUT LEAVING IT ON THE LEVEL OF MERE WORDS<sup>2</sup>

#### 1. Mindfulness and alertness are required in all places of the training

Verse 5.108  
The defining characteristic of introspection  
In brief is only this:  
To examine again and again  
The states of my body and mind.

#### 2. The actual meaning

Verse 5.109  
Thus I shall put these into action with my body,  
For what can be achieved by merely expressing words?  
Will sick people be benefited  
Merely by reading the medical texts?

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<sup>2</sup> The first main point of this chapter is covered under **A. An extensive explanation of the way to practise**. For clarification, refer to page 7 of Lesson 19.

It is saying here that you should investigate with introspection to see whether the behaviour of your body, speech and mind are contrary to the training of the bodhisattvas. You should check whether you are coming under the control of your afflictions. The point is to rely on mindfulness and introspection to practise in this way.

The last verse of this chapter is saying that you should put all the advice into practice with your body, speech and mind. When you do not do this, there is no benefit in just knowing the teachings, just as a very sick person will not recover from his illness merely through reading a medical journal.

In short, we have to examine whatever we do with our body, speech and mind with mindfulness and introspection and weigh the benefit of our actions, i.e., whether they are more beneficial for others or not. Those who engage in activities that are more beneficial for others are said to be the wise ones.

The Arya Nagarjuna says that despite extensive studies and learning, when we do not put the teachings into practice, we will be like a blind person holding a butter lamp that is lit. Knowing all the Dharma and having all the opportunities and conditions to practice it but not doing so is like someone sitting in a body of water, who remains very thirsty.

In Je Rinpoche's *Lam Rim Chen Mo*, he says clearly that in order to practise the Dharma, you have to know the Dharma. In order to know the Dharma, you have to hear it and learn it. The point of learning the Dharma is to be able to practise it.

In order to practise the Dharma, you have to know the Dharma. In order to know the Dharma, you must educate yourself through learning it. The point of learning the Dharma is to educate yourself in knowing the Dharma but the point of knowing the Dharma is to be able to practice it. This is what Je Rinpoche said.

He also said that right from the beginning when you listen to the Dharma, you must understand clearly that the whole point of learning, studying, reflecting on and practising the Dharma is to subdue the mind, i.e., to deal with your afflictions.

Je Rinpoche said clearly that when we do not subdue ourselves, there is no way to and no basis for subduing others.

Therefore first subdue yourself.

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