

**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 31****5 June 2014**

Chapter Six: Verses 6.8 - 6.13. **B. Engaging the mind in the methods for accomplishing patience.** 1. Arresting the causes of anger. B. Instructions on making effort in the methods for overcoming anger. C. The actual method for overcoming that. D. Having examined in detail the causes that give rise to anger, making effort to abandon them. 1. *A general presentation of the divisions of anger in terms of the objects that give rise to anger.* 2. Arresting fury towards that which brings unwanted things. A. Arresting fury towards those who wrong you. 1. Being patient with those who would create suffering for you. *A. Cultivating the patience that accepts suffering.*

*Question:* Is it correct to say that the anger of a lower-level bodhisattva towards a higher-level bodhisattva destroys one great eon of merit, whereas the anger of a higher-level bodhisattva towards a lower-level bodhisattva destroys one hundred great eons of merit?

*Answer:* When a non-bodhisattva gets angry at a bodhisattva, the non-bodhisattva will destroy the merit that he has accumulated over a thousand eons.

When a lower-level bodhisattva gets angry at a higher-level bodhisattva, he destroys merit accumulated over a hundred eons.

*Student:* So it is the other way round.

*Khen Rinpoche:* I said that in the last class, remember? I think I said that. This is what I thought I said.

*Student:* My understanding was that the lower-level bodhisattva has to start from scratch.

*Khen Rinpoche:* I thought I also said that when a bodhisattva who has not yet obtained a prediction of his enlightenment gets angry at a bodhisattva who has obtained a prediction of his enlightenment, then the former bodhisattva would have to train on the path all over again.

It is mentioned clearly that in the cases of merit that is accumulated over a thousand eons and over a hundred eons being destroyed by anger, the object of anger has to be a bodhisattva.

I don't remember exactly but what I remember saying was that when a higher-level bodhisattva gets angry at a lower-level bodhisattva, his anger will destroy the merit

that was accumulated over a hundred eons. I have to check the text again on this point. When we are talking about the destruction of the merit accumulated over a hundred eons, it pertains to either the lower-level bodhisattva or the higher-level bodhisattva.

*Khen Rinpoche: I will check whether it is the higher bodhisattva getting angry at a lower bodhisattva who destroys a hundred eons of virtue or whether it is the lower bodhisattva getting angry at a higher bodhisattva. I need to check. In the last class I mentioned that the lower-level bodhisattva getting angry at a higher-level bodhisattva destroys one hundred eons of merit?*

*Student: No, it was the other way round: a higher-level bodhisattva who gets angry at a lower-level bodhisattva destroys one hundred eons of merit.*

*Khen Rinpoche: Then that must be correct. What I said last time must be correct.*

*In the last class I said that a higher bodhisattva who gets angry towards a lower bodhisattva destroys one hundred eons of merit?*

*Just now I asked whether it was a lower-level bodhisattva getting angry at a higher-level bodhisattva, everyone said yes!*

*I thought I said something like that. If I said a higher bodhisattva gets angry at a lower bodhisattva, a hundred eons of merit is destroyed, then makes some sense. So what is your question?*

*Student: My qualm is this: a higher-level bodhisattva getting angry at a lower-level bodhisattva destroys more merit (i.e., one hundred eons of merit) than a lower-level bodhisattva getting angry at a higher-level bodhisattva who destroys only one eon of merit. What is the logic of this?*

*Answer: Last time when I said that one eon of merit is destroyed, this was an explanation of how the bodhisattva who has not obtained a prediction of enlightenment has to train all over again.*

Delaying the achievement of the next path by one eon is *not* equivalent to having destroyed one great eon worth of merit.

You then have to ask, “Why is this so?” The postponement of the achievement of the path of preparation by one eon is stated for ease of illustration to get the point across but it is not definitive.

When a lower-level bodhisattva who has not obtained a prediction of his enlightenment gets angry at a higher-level bodhisattva who has obtained a prediction of her enlightenment, the result is that the former bodhisattva has to train again.

What is the meaning of ‘to train again’? It is mentioned clearly that to train again does *not* mean that that bodhisattva on the great path of accumulation has to fall

back to the Mahayana small path of accumulation. It means that his achievement of the next path is delayed.

*Student:* So he remains on the great path of accumulation?

*Khen Rinpoche:* Yes.

*Question:* I thought that that bodhisattva has to start from scratch. Then the question is this: if a higher-level bodhisattva on the path of preparation getting angry at a lower-level bodhisattva on the path of accumulation destroys one hundred great eons of merit, will his attainment also be delayed by one hundred great eons?

*Answer:* This is not clear in the text. When we say that a higher-level bodhisattva gets angry at a lower-level bodhisattva and his anger will destroy the merit accumulated over a hundred eons, then perhaps we may also have to say that his achievement of the next level would be delayed by that number of eons. Why? Because he has to accumulate that amount of merit again.

*Khen Rinpoche:* Anyway qualms are never-ending. It is good to have qualms.

This is quite difficult to explain. I don't know exactly. I have mentioned that when a higher-level bodhisattva gets angry at a lower-level bodhisattva, then one hundred eons of merit is destroyed. It could be that. I don't know, I need to check.

Regarding the three countless great eons, one countless great eon is made up of many great eons.

*Khen Rinpoche:* Ven Gyurme (the interpreter) thinks that one countless great eon is just one eon. This is why he has this qualm.

*Question:* So one countless great eon and one great eon which is made up of 80 intermediate eons are different?

*Khen Rinpoche:* Yes. Of course.

*Question:* How long then is one countless great eon?

*Khen Rinpoche:* I don't know how to count this as you have to count exponentially from 1, 10, 100 and so forth. You have to do this ten times then you restart one great countless great eons. Up to ten or twenty times, I am not sure. The figure cannot fit into your calculator. I also don't know how to count this.

A non-bodhisattva gets angry at another non-bodhisattva	Destruction of merit equal to making a full prostration to a stupa (the sutras say that the number of atoms covered by the body during such a prostration is equal to the number of times one will be reborn as a wheel-turning king).
A non-bodhisattva gets angry at a bodhisattva.	Destruction of merit accumulated over a thousand great eons
A lower-level bodhisattva gets angry at a	His achievement of the next path is delayed. E.g., a

higher-level bodhisattva E.g., a bodhisattva who has not received a prediction of his enlightenment gets angry at a bodhisattva who has received a prediction of his enlightenment	bodhisattva on the great Mahayana path of accumulation who is due to enter the Mahayana path of preparation gets angry at another bodhisattva who is already on the path of preparation. Instead of entering the path of preparation, his realisation is delayed for one great eon and he has to retrain for this path all over again.
A higher-level bodhisattva gets angry at a lower-level bodhisattva.	Destruction of merit accumulated over a hundred great eons.

~~~~~

## B. ENGAGING THE MIND IN THE METHODS FOR ACCOMPLISHING PATIENCE (cont'd)

### 1. *Arresting the causes of anger*

#### B. *Instructions on making effort in the methods for overcoming anger*

Verse 6.8

Therefore I should totally destroy  
The fuel of this enemy;  
This enemy has no other function  
Than that of causing me harm.

The cause of anger is due to the building up of mental unhappiness. In the last lesson, we saw how mental unhappiness is likened to the food that builds up our physical strength, which is like the very fuel that makes anger arise and become very powerful.

When we do not eat, our physical strength and health will deteriorate. Likewise when we remove our mental unhappiness, then anger would not have any strength to arise. Therefore we have to strive to stop and remove our mental unhappiness. Why? Because mental unhappiness is the cause of anger, the very thing that leads to anger.

When we do not stop our mental unhappiness, it will grow and when anger arises with hatred, it will destroy us in this life and in our future lives. Anger has no other function than to destroy us in this way. Therefore we must strive in the methods to overcome the enemy of anger.

As to the actual method for overcoming anger, there are two parts:

1. why it is unreasonable to nurture displeasure
2. the reasons for that

#### C. *The actual method for overcoming that*

##### 1. *It is unreasonable to nurture displeasure*

Verse 6.9

Whatever befalls me,  
I shall not disturb my mental joy.  
Having been made unhappy, I shall not accomplish what I wish for  
And my virtues will decline.

Whatever suffering or problems befall us, we have to voluntarily accept them and hold on to this pledge not to be mentally disturbed or unhappy about the situation.

The vast majority of people are of the view that when you do not retaliate when harmed, voluntarily accept problems when they arise or when you are patient, then you will lose out as people will look down on you and take advantage of you. This will lead to more people harming you. They will also cause problems for you because they see that you can be taken advantage of. Putting aside practising patience, most people think that you must retaliate because when you do not fight back or retaliate, you will not be able to protect yourself.

When people are in danger, when they face problems or harm from others, they feel that it is necessary to put on a fierce demeanour, i.e., they must show that they are ready to fight back and retaliate. Most people would do this because they think that this is the way to protect themselves. They must do this. Otherwise they will be taken advantage of.

*Khen Rinpoche: You must show your muscle. When someone bullies you, then you show your muscle.*

When someone is out to harm us or do something bad to us, usually we do not like it. We become mentally unhappy. But what does that do to our mind? When we become unhappy, the only result is that we feel disturbed. The other party remains and is not harmed in any way.

We put on a fierce demeanour, wanting to retaliate or defend ourselves. When we look at our usual reaction in a superficial way, it looks as if we are protecting ourselves. We may have saved ourselves from that small problem but that is just superficial.

We feel we are protecting ourselves but when we analyse further, actually we have destroyed ourselves. This is because when our mental unhappiness builds up in our mind, it becomes anger and hatred. When the anger in our mind manifests, it burns up the merit that we have accumulated over a very long period of time.

When we do not think about it but just look at things superficially, it looks as if there is some benefit to protecting ourselves. But when we analyse the actual result of retaliating—whereby we get angry and act out that anger—what we are doing is just hurting ourselves in the long run. For that reason, the text says that it is inappropriate to be unhappy about things.

## 2. *The reasons for that*

Verse 6.10

Why be unhappy about something

If it can be remedied?

And what is the use of being unhappy about something

If it cannot be remedied?

You become unhappy because of a particular problem or situation. There are various factors and conditions that bring about your mental unhappiness. Then the question should be, “Is there anything that you can do about it?” That is to say: can the conditions bringing about your unhappiness be removed? Verse 6.10 is saying that when something can be done about the situation or problem, there is nothing to be unhappy about.

But even when nothing can be done about the situation or problem, i.e., you cannot change the conditions or factors leading to your unhappiness, all the more there is no reason to be unhappy. What benefit would your unhappiness serve?

For example, you are carrying a bag as you are walking along. You drop the bag and immediately you are upset. Sometimes we do get upset over these small things. But if you think about it, when you drop your bag, all you have to do is to pick it up. Then the problem is solved. In this case, something can be done—you just pick up the bag so why are you upset? In this case, since something can be done, i.e., just picking up the bag, there is no reason to be unhappy.

Another scenario: the thing that you dropped happens to be your treasured mug that you like very much—not very expensive but expensive enough—and it is broken into pieces. Of course, you will be upset and unhappy. In this case, as the mug is already broken, is there anything you can do about it? Nothing! If you were to get upset, what will happen? Your mind is unhappy and you feel very disturbed but is that going to restore your mug?

In short, whether the situation can be remedied or not, there is no reason to be unhappy:

- When it can be remedied, then there is really no reason to be unhappy.
- But when it cannot be remedied, there is also no reason to be unhappy because it serves no benefit.

So whatever it is, there is no real, appropriate or logical reason to being unhappy. Being unhappy brings about no benefit at all! What it brings is only further unhappiness. The only result is that we are disturbing our mind.

When we think about this advice, it is both profound and effective. Whenever we see, read or hear something like this, we should understand that it is a message for ourselves. We should not think that it is a general message for everyone else. This is one problem. When we read or hear something like this, we regard it as if it is an ordinary lecture, “This is a lecture for the public. The advice is directed at someone else. It is not for me”. When we look at this advice with such an attitude, it will never benefit us. Actually it is talking about us and we should relate it to ourselves, “This is advice for me.” Only then will there be benefit and only then can there be change.

It is a completely different matter if you are faultless, i.e., free of faults. If you do not have such problems and you do not have the faults mentioned in these teachings, then it is a completely different matter. Then you can think that this advice is meant for someone else. But when you do have such faults, then you have to understand that the advice is for you and it is for your own mind.

*Khen Rinpoche: This is directed at me, for myself. If you don't have this problem, then of course you can think, "This is not for me. It is addressed to somebody else." But if you have the problem, always point to yourself, "This is talking to me, to myself. Other people are fine. I am the one Shantideva is talking that." Then that is more effective. But most of the time, we think, "It is just talking about someone else." So you just listen and relax.*

Having examined in detail the causes that give rise to anger, making effort to abandon them has three parts:

1. A general presentation of the divisions of anger in terms of the objects that give rise to anger
2. Arresting fury towards that which brings unwanted things
3. Arresting fury towards that which hinders one's desires

*D. Having examined in detail the causes that give rise to anger, making effort to abandon them*

- 1. A general presentation of the divisions of anger in terms of the objects that give rise to anger*

Verse 6.11

For myself and for my friends  
I do not want suffering, contempt,  
Harsh words, and unpleasant talk;  
But for my enemies it is the opposite.

With respect to the objects that can give rise to your anger, some commentaries talk about 24 different objects:

- 12 objects that you do not like such as pain, suffering and so forth
- 12 objects that obstruct you from achieving what you want

The 12 undesirable situations or objects are:

1. the four that pertain to ourselves
2. the four that pertain to people who we consider to be in our circle, including servant, friends and loved ones
3. the four that pertain to our enemies

Let us look at the four situations that affect us or the four objects that pertain to ourselves. Essentially these have to do with the eight worldly dharmas.

We do not like it when:

1. suffering occurs
2. we do not get respect or material goods and possessions
3. somebody says harsh or nasty words to or criticises us
4. we have a bad reputation with others talking behind our backs

These four objects pertain to ourselves. When we come into contact with these four situations, we become unhappy. They are the causes for our mental unhappiness which when left unchecked becomes anger.

Next are the four situations or objects that pertain to our circle. Essentially they are the same four objects as above only they happen to people who we consider to be in our circle. Then we become unhappy and upset. People in our circle include our gurus, parents, partners and children. So we become unhappy and upset when these people:

1. experience suffering
2. do not receive respect or material gain
3. are criticised
4. have a bad reputation

When these four situations happen to people we consider to be in our circle and who matter to us, we become unhappy and upset and that unhappiness eventually turns into anger.

But when these four situations happen to our enemies, we are very happy. When there is anything that prevents these four from happening to our enemies, again we get upset at those obstacles.

These are the 12 undesirable situations or objects.

The other 12 are the desirable situations or objects that we want and in relation to which we can get upset. When anyone or any situation comes along stopping or obstructing these 12 desirable objects, we get upset at the obstruction, be it a person or a situation.

1. We want pleasure and we want to be happy. When anything hinders or obstructs that, we become unhappy with that obstruction.
2. We want to be praised. When anything obstructs us from being praised, then we are upset at that obstruction.
3. We want respect and material gains. When anything obstructs us from achieving these, we get upset at that obstruction.
4. We want a good reputation with people saying good things about us. When there is any obstruction to us having a good reputation, we get upset at that obstruction.

These are the four obstructions that pertain to the objects we want.

We also want people who are in our circle such as our gurus, friends, relatives and loved ones to experience these four objects. When anyone or any situation obstructs our circle of people from experiencing these objects, we also get upset.

But we do not want these four situations to happen to our enemies. For our enemies, what we actually want is the opposite of these four. So when anything prevents the opposite of these four situations from happening to our enemies, then we get upset.

So in brief,

1. There are 12 undesirable situations or objects
2. There are the obstructions or hindrances to the 12 desirable situations or objects.

For each of these 12, there are

1. the four that pertain to ourselves



2. the four that pertain to our circle
3. the four that pertain to our enemies

If we or our loved ones experience suffering which is undesirable, we get upset and angry. Therefore we need to meditate on the patience that accepts suffering that will be covered under five outlines:

1. Reflecting on the fact contaminated phenomena are not beyond being of the nature of suffering.
2. Reflecting on the benefits of meditating on suffering
3. Reflecting on the fact that if one is familiar with such attitudes, they are not difficult to implement
4. The benefits of making effort in abandoning the afflictions
5. An extensive explanation of the benefits of meditating on suffering

2. *Arresting fury towards that which brings unwanted things*

A. *Arresting fury towards those who wrong you*

1. *Being patient with those who would create suffering for you*

A. *Cultivating the patience that accepts suffering*

1. *Reflecting on the fact contaminated phenomena are not beyond being of the nature of suffering*

Verse 6.12 (a,b)

The causes of happiness occasionally occur,

Whereas the causes for suffering are very many.

It is the nature of being in samsara that the things we want do not come about and happen easily. The causes of the happiness that we are looking for are not plentiful. For example, what we want is happiness, pleasure, praise, good reputation, material gain and respect. Although we want these things, the causes for us to experience them are very few and far between.

On the other hand, the opposite of these four objects, i.e., the things that we do not want, although we do not want them, happen very frequently. This is just the nature of being in samsara.

So there are many causes for suffering. It says here, “very many.” As long as we are in samsara, the causes of suffering are very many and they come about without any choice. We do not have any control over them.

Why do the causes for happiness very rarely occur? Why are there so many causes of the suffering we do not like? In order to explain this, we have to examine their causes.

While we are in samsara, all of us hardly engage in or accumulate the causes for happiness; hence the lack of happiness. All of us are engaging in negativities. We accumulate much more non-virtue and negativities than virtue. Hence we experience more problems and suffering. This is the very nature of our existence in samsara. There is nothing that we can do about it. As long as we are in samsara, definitely we

are creating more non-virtue than virtue. The result is that we experience more problems, so many more problems than happiness.

Is there anything we can do about this? There is nothing much that we can do because this is the very nature of samsara. This is why there is samsara. So there is nothing to be done other than to accept it. Therefore we need to cultivate the patience to accept suffering.

The teachings give the example of excrement. Excrement is excrement. It will never smell nice. I think it was Maitreya who used this example: excrement is excrement. There will never come a day when excrement will smell nice. Its very nature is to stink. Samsara is like that. It is the nature of samsara. Once you are in samsara, you will only find problems and you can do nothing about them. If you happen to come across the stench of excrement without choice, you could be either very disturbed by it or you can tell yourself, "Excrement is excrement. This is why it is smelly. What can I do about it?"

*Khen Rinpoche: I thought this was a good example. I saw this from one of the texts. Don't have expectations. We are living in samsara and we have so many expectations, "I want happiness and I want it all the time!" We expect so much. It is like expecting poo to have a good smell. That will never happen. I think the meaning is something like that.*

## 2. Reflecting on the benefits of meditating on suffering

Verse 6.12 (c, d)

Without suffering there is no definite emergence.  
Therefore, mind, you should stand firm.

Verse 6.13

If the followers of Durga and the people of Karnata  
Endure the feelings of burns, cuts, and the like meaninglessly,  
Then for the sake of liberation,  
Why have I no courage?

We know how to meditate on suffering. We don't like suffering and when we think of suffering, we get disenchanted with it. It is necessary to generate the thought of wanting to definitely emerge from or to get out of this situation of being in samsara. On the basis of that, we will develop a wish to be liberated.

Aryadeva mentioned in his *Four Hundred Verses* that when there is no suffering, when we do not think of suffering and when we do not get disenchanted with suffering, there is no way we will be liberated because we will not work for freedom.

One great master said that when you possess a stable disenchantment with cyclic existence/samsara, then there is the peace of nirvana. There is liberation for you. On the other hand, when you think highly of samsara, then you will continue to circle over and over again in samsara. This means that there is no liberation for you.

Whether or not a person achieves nirvana or liberation depends on suffering. Suffering must be the condition. Depending on suffering as the condition, when a

person generates the thought of definite emergence (or renunciation), i.e., wanting to be free from suffering, then that person can achieve freedom from suffering. So in order to achieve nirvana or liberation, one must have suffering as the condition. Therefore there is benefit and a purpose to thinking about or meditating on suffering.

*Khen Rinpoche: Therefore if you love liberation, you must love suffering. It is something like that.*

Therefore the text says, “Without suffering there is no definite emergence,” i.e., there is no thought of definitely wanting to emerge or free oneself from the cyclic existence of suffering. “Therefore, mind, you should stand firm,” and not be disturbed when suffering occurs as there is benefit to be reaped from it.

The teachings are saying that when suffering occurs, the best thing to do is to accept it and be patient with it. We experience suffering because of the ripening of non-virtuous karma that we accumulated in the past. Sometimes we suffer and we get into problems because of the involvement of another person. This person exists as the condition for us to suffer. We feel that our suffering is due to this person. Sometimes when we practise the Dharma, we also experience problems and suffering.

Whether we are experiencing a problem that is the result of the ripening of some non-virtuous karma that we accumulated in the past or whether it is due to another person acting as the condition for us to experience suffering, in both cases, there is nothing much we can do about it. Those situations just happen without any wish or control from our side. At those times, there is nothing to be done other than to accept and put up with the situations.

The teachings are telling us that we must voluntarily accept the situation and problem and be able to bring the experience of the suffering into our own practice.

What if we refuse to accept the situation? Let’s say we make the decision, “I don’t want to accept this situation. I am not going to put up with it. This is nonsense. I cannot accept it. Why should I accept it?” What will be the result of that course of action? Definitely we will be unhappy and that unhappiness will boil over and become anger. This is one outcome.

Secondly sometimes due to not accepting the situation, suffering and problems, we become discouraged, disheartened and disinterested in our practice. We just give up our practice. The refusal to accept and to put up with the suffering becomes a huge obstacle to continuing our practice.

It becomes problematic when we do not mentally voluntarily accept the situation. When we do not accept the problem, we do not want to put up with it or we do not know how to accept it, we will be very unhappy and upset. And this is in addition to the already existing problem. Even as we refuse to accept the situation and are unhappy with it, the original problem remains. It will not go away on its own accord. That is already one problem. By not accepting the situation, we are adding another

problem on top of the original problem. This additional problem is our mental unhappiness about the original problem.

When we are mentally unhappy, many disturbing thoughts arise. We become more and more disturbed, more and more upset and angrier and angrier. So, in addition to the already existing problem, we are adding on our mental suffering, worry and anxiety. This makes the whole situation even more intolerable. When we reach this stage, we now have two problems by which time it has become too late for us to talk about how we are going to accept suffering. It becomes too difficult.

Due to the ripening of our non-virtuous karma together with the gathering of various conditions, problems arise. We can mentally accept the problem by thinking, “This is the nature of samsara. It is like that. There is nothing I can do about it. I will mentally accept it and put up with it.” It is true that by mentally accepting the problem and the suffering, it does not make the problem go away. The problem is still there. This is true. But at least we are not giving ourselves additional suffering by making ourselves unhappy.

So the advice for us here is that when problems arise and suffering ensues, try not to be mentally disturbed and do not let the suffering get the better of us. Do not let the suffering disturb or overwhelm us. We should not give ourselves additional problems. We should not let the situation disturb our Dharma practice. Rather we should use the situation to enhance our practice by generating an even greater determination to practise.

There are people who think, “I have problems because of practising the Dharma.” When you do not know how to think, then this is really a problem and things can get very bad. What I say is this: For us to experience problems due to our Dharma practice, this will hardly happen. It is because we are not practising Dharma. If you were to experience problems because of your Dharma practice, then it could be a sign that your Dharma practice is really very pure. Only then will you experience problems. It doesn't mean that all Buddhists—people who practise the Dharma, who call themselves practitioners—do not have problems.

*Khen Rinpoche: This means don't worry. You come to class. You come to puja. If you get sick, it is not due to that. So don't worry. You won't get those problems.*

For those who practise the Dharma purely and properly, yes. They may experience problems in the form of sicknesses, discomforts like headaches, body aches and so forth. For them, those difficulties are purification because that suffering is in place of the negativities that otherwise will cause them to be reborn in the hells or the lower realms for a very long period of time. Due to their pure practice, an immeasurable amount of negativities is purified such that only a small amount is left that takes on the aspect of problems in this life. For them, when they experience sicknesses and problems, they actually feel very happy.

So if any of you were to get sick, please don't tell me that you got sick because you practised the Dharma. Just say that you got sick because of your karma.

*Khen Rinpoche: I heard some people say, "I read the Diamond Cutter Sutra then I have this problem." Some people say that.*

Interpreted by Ven. Tenzin Gyurme; transcribed by Phuah Soon Ek, Vivien Ng & Aki Yeo; edited by Cecilia Tsong.