

**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 34**17 June 2014****CHAPTER SIX: VERSES 6.31 - 6.49.**

- B. Cultivating the patience that is intent on Dharma (cont'd)
 - 1. Extensive explanation
 - B. Refuting the existence of independent causes (V. 6.31)
 - C. The need to overcome fury (V. 6.32)
 - 2. Synopsis (V. 6.33 - V.6.34)
- C. Cultivating the patience that pays no heed to those who cause harm
 - 1. Engaging the mind in the method of compassion (V. 6. 35 - V. 6.38)
 - 2. Arresting the causes of fury (V. 6.39 - V. 6.41)
 - 3. Reflecting on unwanted occurrences being due to one's own faults (V. 6.42 – V.6.49)

B. CULTIVATING THE PATIENCE THAT IS INTENT ON DHARMA (cont'd)

- 1. *Extensive explanation*
 - B. *Refuting the existence of independent causes*
 - 3. *Once one understands all migrators to be like emanations they see that it is unreasonable to be angry with them*

Verse 6.31

Hence all are governed by others,
 And through the power of that, they have no power.
 Having understood in this way, I shall not become angry
 At all things that are like emanations.

We have looked at Verse 6.31 that talks about how it is inappropriate to become angry based on the understanding of how, "... all things are like emanations." That is when we looked a little bit at the presentation of causality and how effects are produced in dependence upon their causes. Since effects or products are produced in dependence upon their causes, they are other-powered and they do not have any independence.

Based on that, one can think about dependent arising on a subtler level, by understanding how all things are empty of existing inherently.

C. The need to overcome fury

Verse 6.32

OPINION: What will counteract it?

Counteraction would also be inappropriate.

RESPONSE: In dependence upon it the continuity of suffering will be severed;

It is not inappropriate.

Verse 6.32 is an indication of the qualms that are raised by most proponents of Buddhist tenets. When they hear the presentation of the emptiness of inherent existence, that is, how all things do not exist inherently, they cannot accept it. Because, to them, if things do not exist inherently, then the methods and antidotes to counteract anger would not be valid. They would not work.

Since many of you have already studied the module on tenets, you should have some idea of what I have just said. In short, only the Consequence Middle Way School (CMWS) asserts that all phenomena are empty of existing inherently. Everybody else starting from the Autonomy Middle Way School (AMWS) and all the tenets below it asserts the contrary.

For the CMWS, anything and everything that exists exist in mere name, are merely imputed by thought or merely designated. As such, anything and everything that exist cannot exist inherently. They are empty of existing inherently. This is the fundamental assertion of the CMWS. But this assertion cannot be accepted by the other proponents of Buddhist tenets because it cannot fit their minds.

According to proponents of Buddhist tenets, with the exception of the CMWS, if things only exist as merely imputed by thought, this is the same as saying that everything is just made up by the mind. That means you can make up anything with your mind. As long as you make it up with your mind, it exists. This is what most proponents of the Buddhist tenets believe.

As such, if things are just made up by the mind, how then do you classify something as the truth and others as false? How can you coherently explain that in dependence on these sets of causes, you will have these effects or that you will definitely have these effects because there are these set of causes? If you assert that everything is just merely imputed by mind, you will not be able to coherently posit cause and effect, truth and falsity and so forth.

The vast majority of proponents of Buddhist tenets, with the exception of proponents of the highest school (CMWS), believe that anything and everything that exists exist from their own side. There is something right there from their own side, something that makes them different from another phenomenon.

What is the clear sign of that? For example, a seed exists from its own side. It functions to produce a sprout. That ability to produce a sprout is inherent in the seed. It is a special quality and feature of the seed. Otherwise according to these proponents, if things were just merely imputed by the mind—you could make up anything you want—why can't the seed produce a horse or an elephant? The very fact that a seed can only produce a sprout is a clear sign that there is something from the side of the seed that makes it different. Therefore things are not merely imputed by the mind. There is something right there from the side of the object.

These are the common general viewpoints of the vast majority of Buddhist tenets with the exception of the highest school, the CMWS. What they assert is what we

think, is it not? When we think of a seed, how does it produce a sprout? We think that the seed really produces a sprout right there from its own side. We cannot even imagine how that is something which is merely imputed by thought. That cannot fit our mind. There is no way we will think that that is merely imputed by thought. There is something right there—a seed that has a special potential to produce a sprout. What we think is exactly what most proponents of the Buddhist tenets assert.

In Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Treatise on Wisdom*, there is an objection raised by the lower tenets that says,

If things do not exist inherently, they do not exist by their own nature. Then there is no way you can posit causality. There is no way you can coherently explain the Four Noble Truths.

This is the position of the lower tenets:

- If things do not exist inherently, then there is nothing right there from the side of the object.
- Then there is no way you can talk about causality.
- Then there is no way you can talk about the four noble truths.
- If you cannot coherently explain the four noble truths, there is no way you can present the Three Jewels.

This is essentially what the first two sentences of verse 6.32 are saying. The objection raised there is that if things do not exist inherently, then there is no way you can coherently explain how, in dependence on cultivating the antidotes, you can counteract anger.

Most proponents of Buddhist tenets, except the CMWS, objected, "If you say that things do not exist inherently, that is, that there is nothing there from the side of the object and that everything is merely imputed by thought, then:

- There is no way you can explain the creation of things.
- There is no way to explain how things disintegrate.
- There is no way to explain the four noble truths.
- As such you cannot explain causality.
- As such you cannot coherently posit the Three Jewels."

The CMWS has a completely different stand. In fact the CMWS turned the argument against their opponents by asserting, "If in reality, things existed inherently from their own side, then:

- There is no way you can posit causality.
- There is no way you can posit the production and disintegration of things.
- There is no way that you can coherently explain the four noble truths.
- As such there is no way you can explain the Three Jewels."

The CMWS said that if you assert inherent existence, you cannot posit all of these things. It is only when you assert the emptiness of inherent existence can you then posit causality, production and disintegration, the four noble truths, the Three Jewels and so forth.

This is the debate between the CMWS and the proponents of the other Buddhist tenets.

According to your view, which is a better position? All of you will say that the position of the Consequence Middle Way School is the best! But it is insufficient to just say that theirs is the best position or that it is the only truth. You have to prove it. Why is this so?

Khen Rinpoche: Somebody explain a little bit why the CMWS position is the best.

Before we can figure this out, first we have to think about the meaning of inherent existence and then the emptiness of inherent existence. What do they mean? What is inherent existence? What is the emptiness of inherent existence?

Everybody has to think for himself the meaning of inherent existence. If there is such a thing as inherent existence, what is it? Looking at the words, 'inherent existence' themselves, what are they trying to tell you?

Inherent existence means existing from its own side, i.e., existing inherently. Isn't it trying to tell you that it can exist on its own, independent of other factors, i.e., it can exist without depending on other factors? The meaning of inherent existence is this: If something exists inherently,

- it can exist by its own entity
- it exists from its own side
- it exists on its own power
- it is self-instituting
- it does not have to depend on any other factors

If things existed inherently, how then can cause and effect possibly work? If there is such a thing as inherent existence that means something can exist in and of itself, from its own side, without depending on any other factors. It can stand alone. It is self-instituting. So it is independent.

If something can exist independently, there is no need for dependency.

And if there is no need for dependency, how are you going to talk about cause and effect? Don't effects depend on causes? Causality then cannot work if things are inherently existent.

Precisely because the view of reality is that things are dependently originated, that they are dependent-arising, therefore things cannot exist inherently. While things are empty of existing inherently, they exist as dependently originated. Therefore only when you assert the emptiness of inherent existence can you then coherently posit dependent arising.

As such, by depending on the antidote, the practice of patience and so forth, one can achieve the result, i.e., the abandonment of the objects of abandonment such as anger. That is basically the meaning of the third and fourth lines of verse 6.32.

Although the antidote and the process of counteracting anger do not exist inherently, the process of applying the antidotes exist conventionally. In dependence on that, one is able to counteract the object of abandonment, in this case, anger. If you counteract anger, you will not experience the results of anger.

2. *Synopsis*

Verse 6.33

So when seeing an enemy or even a friend
Doing something incorrect,
By thinking, “It arises from such conditions,”
I shall remain in a happy frame of mind.

Verse 6.34

If things were established with one’s freedom,
Then since no one wishes to suffer,
Suffering would not occur
To any embodied creature.

We have seen:

- how things and events arise from their own causes and conditions
- how things and events are dependently originated at the level of causality
- that there is something being dependently designated

As such, you apply this understanding to a situation that involves somebody, be it a friend or an enemy, harming us or doing something incorrect. We have to understand that they are doing something that we don’t like or think is incorrect or harming us in some way because there must be certain causes and conditions that lead them to these actions. The whole situation, whatever we think is inappropriate, has arisen in dependence on some other factors.

Verse 6.33 is saying that as such we should remain calm and happy in spite of these different difficult situations. These situations arose because of various causes and conditions.

If things and events do not arise due to their own causes and conditions but rather if they can arise out choice, i.e., one has the freedom to make a choice, why are we suffering? Although all of us are the same in not wanting suffering and wanting only happiness, how come things do not go our way?

So obviously things and events do not arise because we want them to or we have the freedom of making a choice. No, things and events do not arise by choice. Things and events arise due to the coming together of their own respective causes and conditions. As such whatever situations or experience we may encounter is the result of the coming together of many causes and conditions. As such they are not independent. Rather they are dependently arisen.

With that, we have finished with the cultivation of the patience that is intent on Dharma. The next division of patience is the patience that pays no heed to those who cause harm. Cultivating this patience is a method for disregarding the harm that is

done to us. In order to do this, we have to stop ourselves from getting angry with the harm that we receive. One of the methods for doing that is to generate compassion.

C. CULTIVATING THE PATIENCE THAT PAYS NO HEED TO THOSE WHO CAUSE HARM

1. *Engaging the mind in the method of compassion*

A. *Some sentient beings cause themselves harm due to the lack of understanding*

Verse 6.35

Through lacking conscientiousness

People even harm themselves with thorns and other things,

And for the sake of obtaining women and the like

They become obsessed and starve themselves.

Verse 6.36

And there are some who harm themselves

By hanging themselves, leaping from cliffs,

Eating poison and incompatible food

And unmeritorious deeds.

These two verses are saying that when we experience harm from somebody, we have to focus on how they are actually harming themselves. Put aside getting angry with them, actually there are only reasons to have concern for and generate compassion towards them.

B. *If once can kill even oneself due to lack of understanding, it is not amazing that they can cause harm to others*

Verse 6.37

If, when under the influence of afflictions,

People will even kill their treasured selves,

How can they not cause harm

To the bodies of others?

If people can harm themselves or take their own lives, their most treasured possession, under the influence of afflictions, then why are we so surprised when we see them harming others including us.

C. *Therefore it is reasonable to feel compassion for them*

Verse 6.38

Even if I virtually cannot develop compassion for such people

Who through the arising of afflictions

Set out to kill me and so forth,

The last thing I should do is to become angry with them.

The verse is saying that it is extremely inappropriate to be angry with those who harm us while under the influence of their own afflictions. In reality, it is only appropriate to generate compassion towards such harm-doers. Even if we can't generate compassion towards them, the least we could do is not to become angry with them.

The next section is about stopping the causes of anger.

2. *Arresting the causes of fury*

A. *It is unreasonable to be angry with a child if it is in his nature to lack understanding and act so*

Verse 6.39

Even if it were the nature of the childish
To cause harm to other beings,
It would be inappropriate to be angry with them,
For this would be like begrudging fire for having the nature to burn.

When somebody, an ordinary being, is harming us, the first thing to analyse is this, “Is the nature of that person childish or not?” If it is in the nature of that person to be childish, it is obvious that person will harm us. Then there is no need to begrudge the person for harming us because that is his nature, just as you would not be angry at the fire for burning your hand if you were to put your hand in it. It is the nature of fire to burn so what do you expect?

Since it is in the nature of that person to act in that way, then it is inappropriate and incorrect to be angry with him.

But even if it is not in the nature of that person to behave in that way, it is still inappropriate to be angry with him.

B. *It is unreasonable to be furious even if the faults that brought about harm are adventitious*

Verse 6.40

And even if the fault were incidental
In sentient beings of definite nature,
It would be inappropriate to be angry,
For this would be like begrudging space for allowing smoke to rise in it.

The analysis is of the harm-doer, somebody who causes us problems or difficulties. We should analyse and check whether it is in the nature of that person to harm or not. It is either in the nature of that person or it must be due to some temporary conditions. If it is in the nature of that person to harm, then it is inappropriate to get angry because that would be like begrudging fire for burning your hand if you put your hand in the fire.

If it is not in the nature of the person to harm—meaning the person is generally by nature good-hearted, calm and patient—but due to certain causes and conditions, he may sometimes get upset. These occasions are incidental or temporary. If it is not in the nature of the person to harm, the harm is really incidental, then all the more it is also inappropriate to be angry with that person. Because being angry with such a person is like being angry at the sky itself rather than getting angry at the smoke that is covering the sky. Sometimes when we burn something, smoke is produced. What we are unhappy with is the smoke, isn't it? But the smoke is temporary. However instead of getting angry at the smoke, we get angry at the sky. Getting angry at the sky is like getting angry at the person who is generally by nature good-hearted and

calm.

Next is analysing how anger is inappropriate by looking at the actual causes that brought about the anger and its supporting or indirect causes.

C. By examining the direct and/or indirect causes, one comes to see that being furious is unreasonable

Verse 6.41

If I become angry with the wielder,
Although I am directly harmed by the stick and so forth,
Then since he too is incited by hatred,
I should be angry with the two or with the hatred.

When somebody hits us with a stick, we experience pain and immediately get upset. Who are we upset with? We do not get upset with the stick that is the actual thing that is causing us pain. Rather we get upset and angry with the person wielding the stick because we think that since the stick is wielded by the harm-doer, the stick does not have any choice. It is actually the person who is wielding the stick who is at fault. This is what we think.

If we accept this reasoning, then we should also accept that likewise the person who is harming us is under the control of his own afflictions such as his anger. Why are we upset with him and not with his anger? If we really want to be upset, we should be upset with the harm-doer's anger and not the harm-doer himself.

The next section is about understanding that whenever we get something that we do not like, it is our own doing and our own fault.

3. *Reflecting on unwanted occurrences being due to one's own faults*

A. *The meaning of the actual*

1. *Reflecting on the harm brought upon you by another as one's own fault*

Verse 6.42

Previously I caused similar harm
To sentient beings.
Therefore it is right for this harm to occur
To me who is the agent of harm to sentient beings.

Whatever undesirable experience befalls us, at the end of the day, it is the result of our own doing in the past. Because we have caused similar harm to others in our past lives, as a result, the karma is now ripening upon us.

2. *The cause of suffering is a disadvantage of having taken a body*

Verse 6.43

Both the weapon and my body
Are causes of my suffering.
Since he gave rise to the weapon and I to the body,
With whom should I be angry?

When somebody hits us with a weapon and we feel pain, this experience of pain is the coming together of the attacker and our own body. When this body that can experience pain is hit by somebody who is wielding a weapon then pain arises. The harm-doer and we ourselves, the victim, are both causes of the suffering that we experience.

In order for anything to arise, there must be the substantial cause and the cooperative conditions. So the person who is attacking us and the stick are the cooperative conditions for producing the pain we feel and we ourselves with our body are the substantial cause for the experience of that pain. Essentially we are the main cause for the arising of that painful experience.

If both the harm-doer and we ourselves are equally responsible for the arising of this painful experience, then we have to ask ourselves, “Why are we particularly upset with the harm-doer only?” If we really feel justified in being upset, we should be equally upset with ourselves since we have a role to play in this painful experience. So there is no justification and no real reason for being upset with the harm-doer.

Verse 6.44

If in blind attachment I cling
To this suffering abscess of a human form
That cannot bear to be touched,
With whom should I be angry when it is hurt?

The nature of our body is such that it is easily harmed and difficult to sustain. This body of ours is like a huge boil. All it takes is some small little condition for us to feel discomfort and pain. When the temperature goes up a little bit, just a little bit of heat, we start to feel hot and uncomfortable. But if the weather turns a bit cold, we also feel very uncomfortable. So that is the nature of our body.

Here the verse is saying that the problem originates with us because we have this suffering body in the first place. The body that we have is in the nature of suffering. It is something that is easily lost and very difficult to keep alive and to sustain. That is the nature of this body of ours. But due to our ignorance, we develop a very strong attachment towards our body. We cling to it very strongly with the notion, “This is my body.” Due to that clinging, we find it very difficult to tolerate any harm that is done to this body. So why is it that we are angry at the harm-doer when, in fact, the problem lies with us?

3. *Seeing it as a disadvantage of having created the causes of suffering in a former life*

Verse 6.45

The childish do not wish to suffer,
And are greatly attached to its causes,
Thus they are harmed by their own misdeeds;
Why should they begrudge others?

Although nobody likes to suffer and everybody wants happiness, however, most people run after the causes of suffering. Although they don't like suffering, they run

after the causes of suffering.

Our problems and suffering are the ripening results of the non-virtuous actions that we have accumulated in the past. Although we do not like suffering, in the past, we had craved for and ran after the causes of suffering. We killed others, we stole their possessions and so forth. As a result of these non-virtuous actions, we are experiencing problems now.

Verse 6.46

For example, just like the guardians of hell
And the forest of sword leaves,
So this is produced by my actions;
At what should I be angry?

All the experiences of burning in the hells, being tortured by hell guardians and having to encounter the forest of sword-leaves in the hells and so forth are the results of our own non-virtuous karma. In short, every suffering and every single problem that we experience is a result of our own non-virtue accumulated in the past. As such, it is inappropriate to be upset with the situation or with the harm-doer. Rather we have to understand that all these problems are the results of our own doing.

In fact, when somebody harms us, we are responsible for that person engaging in non-virtue because in the first place we are the cause for that person to harm us. It is our own karma that instigated this. In fact, we are causing somebody else to create non-virtue.

4. As it is one's own karma that presses others into bringing suffering upon us, it is unreasonable to be furious with them

Verse 6.47

Having been instigated by my own actions,
Those who cause me harm come into being.
If due to this they should proceed to sentient beings' hell
Am I not destroying them?

It is due to the instigation, so to speak, of our own non-virtue accumulated in the past that we now have a harm-doer causing problems for us. That harm-doer causing us harm is actually instigated by our own non-virtuous karma. As such, we are the one who is causing our enemies or harm-doers to harm to us. If that is the case, aren't we the ones who are sending them to the lower realms such as the hells?

If we analyse and think about this, is it not the case that we are the actual harm-doers, not the other person who we consider to be the harm-doer? We are actually the harm-doer because it is our non-virtue that caused that person to harm us. Through that, the person is accumulating negative karma and will go to the hells, so we are the ones sending them to the lower realms. When we think about this, this can really help us to practise patience.

5. *Fury itself is erroneous and thus unreasonable*

Verse 6.48

By taking them as objects
I purify much negativity through patience.
But in dependence upon me they will proceed
To hell suffering for a long time.

Verse 6.49

So since I am causing harm to them
And they are benefiting me,
Why, unruly mind, do you become angry
Erroneously?

If we are able to practise patience in dependence on an enemy or a harm-doer, besides being able to develop our patience, we are also able to purify negativities accumulated in the past. As such, that enemy becomes a benefactor for oneself.

Due to our own non-virtue, a harm-doer comes into our life and causes us problems. It is at the instigation, so to speak, of our own non-virtue. The harm-doer harms us and in so doing, accumulates great non-virtue. As a result, he will have to suffer in the lower realms such as the hells for a very long time. So if we think about it, we have become the harm-doer instead.

We have become the harm-doer of the person harming us. But our harm-doer can become our benefactor if we are able to practise patience. If we are able to cultivate and develop our patience in dependence upon that person, we will complete the accumulation of our merit and purify our negativities. We receive all these benefits from our harm-doer.

If the harm-doer is really so very beneficial for us, helping us to cultivate our patience, then getting angry at him would be a mistake. So here the verse is asking, “Why are you angry with your benefactor?” Putting aside getting angry with that person, we should in fact like and be very happy with that person.

These are the various arguments that we can use to develop the patience that disregards any harm done to us. If we really think about them, they are pretty useful and definitely they will help us in controlling our anger.

- Firstly, we should recognise that when we experience harm from somebody, it is incorrect to just put all the blame on the harm-doer because we ourselves are responsible as well. The harm-doer may be the one holding the weapon but because we have a body, therefore we can feel pain. We are equally responsible for that experience of pain when we are harmed by somebody.
- Second, we have to think about karma. At the end of the day, whatever problems and suffering we experience are the results of our own non-virtue. As such, we cannot point our finger at anybody else out there. We can only point the finger at ourselves.
- On top of that, we have to think about how we are the ones who are actually the cause of the harm-doer going to hell and how we receive benefit from that so-called harm-doer in terms of being able to practise patience in dependence on

him and so forth.

If we put all these reasons together, then I guess it is very useful for cultivating the patience that disregards harm.

There are many reasons or arguments here. The thing that we have to do is to sit down, reflect and think about them. If we do not use them, we do not reflect on them, then nothing can be done. They are just words. But if we think about them, then they are quite useful.

This is because our instinctive reaction is that whenever we experience a problem or harm, we never think we are at fault. We are never responsible. It is always the fault of something, somebody or some situation out there. That is our instinctive reaction. But if we sit down and think about it, even if we can just acknowledge that we have a role to play, that we have some responsibility, that in itself alone is really very helpful for controlling our anger.

If we have the ability to think a little bit more deeply—how in fact we are the harm-doer and our enemy has become our benefactor in that he is the best teacher for cultivating patience and so forth—then our practice of patience becomes more profound and deeper. It is then even possible to view that enemy as a teacher and to be able to respect the harm-doer. Of course, for those who have reached that level of practice, i.e., being able to regard the harm-doer as their benefactor, I think from that day onwards, probably the enemy and the harm-doer will not exist for that person.

~~~~~

*Question:* In Lesson 25, it was mentioned that, as stated in the *Treasury of Manifest Knowledge*, afflictions such as ignorance, the view of the transitory collection, could be unspecified. What is the meaning of “unspecified”?

*Answer:* In the case of ignorance, the view of the transitory collection and the view holding on to an extreme, they were not specified by the Buddha in his teachings to be either virtuous or non-virtuous. That means it is unspecified, i.e., it is neither virtuous nor non-virtuous.

*Student:* If unspecified means that it is not specified as to whether it is virtue or non-virtue, how different is this term from neutral karma? Is there a term for something that can be virtuous or non-virtuous such as, for example, the changeable mental factor of sleep?

*Khen Rinpoche:* I will think about this.

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