

**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 36**24 June 2014****CHAPTER SIX: VERSES 6.62 - 6.74.**

- 2. Being patient with those who would belittle you and so forth
 - D. It is unreasonable to be furious because others lack faith in you (V. 6.62 – V. 6.63)
- B. Arresting fury towards those who wrong those dear to oneself (V. 6.64 – V. 6.75)¹
 - A. Arresting it by means of the patience that is intent on Dharma (V. 6.64 – V. 6.65)
 - B. Arresting it by means of the patience that pays no heed to those who cause harm (V. 6.66 – V. 6.74)

Pertaining to the Sunday discussion question on how the bodhisattvas have the permission to engage in the three bodily non-virtues and the four verbal non-virtues but not the three mental non-virtues, do bodhisattvas have permission to have covetousness or not?

Khen Rinpoche: This is the question. Explain why. Don't just say no. You must give the reason why. Saying no is not enough.

Student: Because it is a non-virtue of the mind.

Khen Rinpoche: You mean killing is virtuous? Then people will ask why killing is allowed for bodhisattvas when killing is non-virtuous. You have to have to think about that. You already accept seven non-virtues are allowed. Then how can you just say it is a non-virtue of the mind? You got the question? Why is it not allowed or allowed?

It is entirely possible for a bodhisattva to steal motivated by covetousness, isn't it? You can imagine that, right? So do bodhisattvas have covetousness or not? Do bodhisattvas have attachment or not?

Student: Yes, they do.

Are there situations where it is permitted for bodhisattvas to have attachment? This is basically tied to the first question of the Sunday discussion. Do bodhisattvas have the permission to have covetousness or not?

¹ Arresting fury towards that which brings unwanted things (V. 6.12 – V. 6.86)

- A. Arresting fury towards those who wrong you (V. 6.12 – V. 6.63)
- B. Arresting fury towards those who wrong those dear to oneself (V. 6.64 – V. 6.75)
- C. Arresting fury towards those who do well by one's enemies (V. 6.76 – V. 6.86)

Student: No.

Khen Rinpoche: Explain why.

(Student's response is inaudible).

Khen Rinpoche: Yes, I know the ten non-virtues and that covetousness is one of them. I know that. My question is why is it not allowed? Seven are allowed and three are not allowed. Why are the three not allowed? The question is that. You still didn't get the question.

(Student's response is inaudible).

Attachment or desire is an affliction. There are things that bodhisattvas do out of attachment in order to accomplish great purposes for others. That is clear.

I think I mentioned this before. The bodhisattvas do not focus specifically on abandoning attachment. This is unlike what is practised on the Hinayana path to liberation where attachment is an affliction that must necessarily be abandoned.

In the Paramitayana or the general Mahayana vehicle, it is taught that the bodhisattvas do use afflictions such as attachment as a method or branch to accomplish great purposes for sentient beings. There are historical accounts of bodhisattvas in the past who fathered many children in order to benefit the teachings of the Buddha.

Khen Rinpoche: That is the question. Think about it, "Why is it not allowed?" Next time, you give me the answer as to why covetousness and attachment are not allowed.

~~~~~

The next section is on why it is inappropriate to be angry with others who have no faith in us.

## **2. BEING PATIENT WITH THOSE WHO WOULD BELITTLE YOU AND SO FORTH (cont'd)**

*D. It is unreasonable to be furious because others lack faith in you*

- 1. As speaking ill of oneself causes one to lose faith in the speaker, it is reasonable to be furious with the act of speaking ill of others*

Verse 6.62

Since sentient beings will be weakened,  
I shall be angry with those who say unpleasant things.  
Why are you not likewise angry  
With those who say unpleasant things to other people?

You may think that when others say unpleasant things to you, this may cause some people to lose faith in you. For example, you may be thinking, "When these people hear the criticism directed at me, they will lose faith in me. Since this is not what I

want, as such, I have the right to be upset with the person who is criticising me. Therefore I need to do something to that person since he is criticising and saying bad things about me. He is exhausting his own merit and he is going to the lower realms. Therefore I must stop him.” You may feel that maybe you need a bit of aggressiveness or anger to stop him.

If you happen to think like this, the answer to such thoughts is in verses 6.62 c, d, “Why are you not likewise angry/ With those who say unpleasant things to other people?” If you hear others criticising someone else, say, someone who has more qualities than you, in that situation, why are you not upset with these other people?

Earlier on, you think, “When somebody is upset with me because he has no faith in me, disliking me and criticising me, he will degenerate his own merit and he will go to the lower realms.” We see that as a reason for acting, “Therefore I must do something about it. I need to counteract that.”

If that is what you really think, the same logic should also be applied to the situation when somebody else is being criticised. When somebody else is being criticized, that critic is also experiencing non-faith in the person he is criticising. His criticism of that person will lead to him exhausting his merit and going to the lower realms. Following the same logic, even if you are not the one being criticised, you should also be upset at that critic who is criticising somebody else.

When you hear someone criticising another person, why are you not angry since that same logic also applies in that situation as well? In that situation, it is also appropriate for you to be upset. But you are not upset when it involves somebody else criticising another person; though logically, you should also be upset in that situation.

*Khen Rinpoche: You get the logic? You must get the logic and line of reasoning.*

Of course, when this logic is thrown back at you, you will oppose it. You may then think, “There is no reason for me to get upset in this situation because if I were to get upset, then there is no end to getting upset. When somebody else is being criticised, the primary responsibility lies with that person who is criticised. It is up to her to do something about it. It is not my problem as it doesn’t involve me. So I don’t have to get upset.”

If this is what we think, the rebuttal to that comes in Verse 6.63.

*2. If one can bear the lack of faith in others, it is reasonable to bear the lack of faith others may not have in oneself due to the afflictions*

Verse 6.63

If you are patient with this lack of faith  
Because it is related to others’ non-faith,  
Then why are you not patient with unpleasant words  
Since they are related to the arising of afflictions?

When you look at this situation—where someone is upset with and criticising another person primarily due to his lack of faith in that person, seeing that person's faults—you may think that there must be a reason for him to criticise the other person. The other person must be at fault in some way. She may have done something wrong or said something wrong. Therefore she is being criticised now. Is this not what you think in this situation?

You may think, “The person who is being criticised definitely must have a role to play. She may have done or said something wrong. I don't have to be upset in that situation. She is at fault since she created the situation for herself to be criticised.

As such, I have no reason to be upset at the person who is criticising her. It is none of my business. That situation doesn't affect me. As such, I shall remain relaxed and be patient.”

Now bringing the case back to yourself: The person out of non-faith in you criticises you and says unpleasant words to you. But he is doing so because of his own afflictions. As we saw earlier in the text, he has no independence whatsoever. He is under the control of his own afflictions.

In essence, the teachings in this section is actually telling us that when we experience all these problems—criticisms, people talking behind our backs, people disliking us or not having faith in us and so forth—we should put aside getting angry with them.

The teachings say that, in reality, we should be very happy when these things happen. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, when we experience such problems and difficulties, we should regard these difficult situations or problems as a broom that sweeps away all our negativities. We should regard these situations as something that persuades us to engage in virtue.

So when we experience problems such as criticism directed at us, we have to remember and remind ourselves that ultimately it is our own doing. We are experiencing these situations now as the result of the ripening of the non-virtues that we ourselves had accumulated in the past.

We don't like it when these things happen to us. This is what we call the eight worldly dharmas. When we are experiencing these eight worldly dharmas, we can think about some of the advice that is mentioned in this chapter and put them into practice.

Up to this point in this chapter, we have seen that there are so many reasons thrown at us, proving to us that no matter what we may think or what we may say, at the end of the day, it can be shown that there is no reason whatsoever to justify our anger. Anger is completely inappropriate and no exception is made at all with regard to anger.

The next section talks about stopping ourselves from getting angry when our loved ones, the people who matter to us and who we consider to be in our circle, are harmed.

Earlier we saw the many reasons why it is inappropriate for us to be upset when we are harmed. That being said, even if we accept that it is inappropriate to get upset when we ourselves are harmed, we may think that it is a different matter if our loved ones, the people who matter to us and who we consider to be in our circle, such as our own teachers or people who have faith in us, are harmed. Then we have a reason to be upset. We think, “I am not getting upset because of myself.”

But the next verse says that even if the Three Jewels and so forth are harmed, it is *still* inappropriate to be upset.

Gyaltsab Je puts forth an argument that we ourselves may already have thought of, “Although it is inappropriate for me to be upset when I am harmed, but if the Three Jewels are harmed, then even if I get upset, I won't incur any faults because I am upset for the Three Jewels. As such, I am not at fault.”

If we have such thoughts, then the answer to that is in verse 6.64

## **B. ARRESTING FURY TOWARDS THOSE WHO WRONG THOSE DEAR TO ONESELF**

1. *Arresting it by means of the patience that is intent on Dharma*
  - A. *The reasons why it is unreasonable to be furious with those who cause harm to statues of the Buddha, etc.*

Verse 6.64

Should others talk frivolously about or even destroy  
Holy images, reliquaries, and the sacred Dharma,  
My hatred is inappropriate,  
For the buddhas and so forth can never be harmed.

The objects to whom we go for refuge are the Three Jewels: the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

Let's say the Buddha is being harmed. But it is impossible for the Buddha to be unhappy. As such, the Buddha cannot be harmed.

The Sangha Jewel here is referring to the superiors who have realised emptiness directly. As such, they have abandoned the intellectually acquired grasping at a self. When they are harmed, they do not have grasping, feeling, “I am being harmed.” As such, they do not become unhappy.

In that sense, the Buddha is not harmed and the Sangha is also not harmed. What is left is the Dharma Jewel, true paths and true cessations. The true paths and true cessations also cannot be harmed.

Since the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha do not experience unhappiness nor could they be harmed, therefore it is inappropriate to get angry at those who harm the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Likewise we talk about the representations of the Buddha's body, speech and mind. Whether it is a holy object like a statue, painting, scriptures or stupas, these are atomically established. They are matter and form. Even if these holy objects are destroyed, the Buddha can never be harmed. So in those situations, there are no reason to be upset for it is possible for people to get upset when they see others destroying holy objects.

There are also people who criticise or put down the Dharma. Even then there is no justification for being upset with them. It is inappropriate to be upset with such people. When people engage in destructive acts such as criticising or putting down the Dharma and destroying holy objects, they accumulate so much negative karma. So when we see people doing these things, setting aside not getting upset or angry with them, in fact we should have even more compassion for them. It is completely appropriate to develop even more care, concern and compassion for them.

Likewise the next section shows how we should be patient with harm that is directed at the people who matter to us.

*B. Likewise it is reasonable to be patient with those who cause harm to those dear to oneself*

Verse 6.65

I should counteract anger towards those  
Who harm my spiritual masters, relatives and so forth, and friends,  
By seeing, as in the manner shown before,  
That they arise from conditions.

The verse is saying that it is inappropriate for us to be upset or angry at those who criticise or harm our gurus, relatives such as our parents and loved ones and friends. Why? Because there are reasons for these things happening such as the ripening of karma and so forth. The harm that is directed at our gurus, relatives, loved ones, friends and so forth is the result of the coming together of various causes and conditions.

Next it is inappropriate to become angry only at sentient beings.

2. *Arresting it by means of the patience that pays no heed to those who cause harm*

*A. It is unreasonable to be furious only with animate beings*

Verse 6.66

If embodied creatures are harmed  
By both those with mind and those without mind,  
Why single out and begrudge only those with mind?  
Therefore I should be patient with harm.

We are harmed by a combination of the sources of harm that include sentient beings and non-sentient beings. If somebody is wielding a weapon, that sentient being is the person with a mind to harm us.

But there are also other factors such as the four elements: earth, water, fire and wind. We are also harmed by these four elements.

Yet we only get upset at sentient beings, i.e., those with a mind. We don't get upset with the elements. Both sentient and non-sentient beings are sources of harm and are equally responsible for causing us pain. Why then are we only upset at one and not the other? This verse is asking us why do we single out and get upset only with sentient beings. At the same time, we do not get upset with those non-sentient sources of harms.

*B. The reasons fury is unreasonable*

Verse 6.67

Should one person do harm out of confusion  
And another is confused and gets angry,  
Then who would be without fault?  
And who would be at fault?

People often engage in activities that harm others such as stealing and killing while being ignorant of the consequences of their actions that they have to experience in the future in the form of suffering. In the same way, there are people who get upset when they are harmed by others while being ignorant of the consequences of getting angry.

So there are people who are ignorant of the consequences of their actions of harming others and there are also people who are ignorant of the consequences of getting angry at the harm-doers. These two types of people are acting out of their ignorance and under the influence of the Mara of afflictions.

As such, you cannot attribute blame to one and not the other. *Both* are equally at fault—the person who harms others while ignorant of the consequences of his actions and the person who gets angry when he is harmed while ignorant of the consequences of getting angry. So if you want to attribute blame, both are at fault.

Essentially this verse is saying that there is no justification for retaliating against any harm directed at oneself.

*C. Reflecting on one's own faults*

Verse 6.68

Why did I previously commit those actions  
Because of which others now cause harm?  
If all are related to my actions  
Why should I begrudge them?

Verse 6.69

Having seen thus, no matter what,  
I should strive in this way for what is meritorious,  
That all will have  
Loving thoughts towards each other.

Essentially when we see harm directed at our loved ones and the people who matter to us, we have to remember and understand that it is due to the power of karma, i.e., the ripening of the non-virtue accumulated in the past. As such, when the conditions come together, there is nothing you can do as it is irreversible and it will just happen. Since these experiences are the results of karma, as such, there is no justification for being upset with those who harm our loved ones.

This is something that you have to think about for yourself. When there are situations where you see your loved ones or the people who matter to you being harmed for whatever reason, you have to remember that there is no real justification for you to be upset. Rather you can use the opportunity to think, “How wonderful it would be if we could all have love for one another. How wonderful it would be if I could have love towards both my loved ones and the people who are harming my loved ones.”

These are advice for a person to develop love, compassion and bodhicitta. In these situations when our loved ones are harmed, instead of reacting with anger, we should develop love for both our loved ones and the people who are harming them.

Next is striving not to let one’s virtue degenerate.

*D. Reflecting on the benefits of this specific kind of patience*

*1. Making effort so that one’s virtue does not deteriorate*

Verse 6.70

For example, if a fire in one house  
Has moved into another house,  
It is right to remove and get rid of straw and such things  
That the fire will spread to.

Verse 6.71

Likewise when my mind is attached to something  
And the fire of hatred spreads,  
I should immediately get rid of it  
For fear of my merit being burned.

If your neighbour’s house catches fire and you sense that the fire will spread soon to your house, in that situation, if you happen to have flammable things in your house such as furniture and so forth that you are emotionally attached to, you realise, “I better get rid of all these things before my house catches fire.” You will throw them away as you know that if you keep those things, your house will burn down completely. In that situation, probably you will be happy to throw them away quickly.

Likewise when your loved ones and the people who matter to you are harmed, probably they will get very upset. The fire of their anger will be blazing in their mind, consuming the merit that they have accumulated. But if you also get upset when you see that they are harmed, then the fire of anger will also burn in your mind and thereby consume the merit that you have accumulated.



The only reason why the fire of anger in the mind of your loved ones can move from their mind into yours and through that consume your merit is because of your attachment for them. If you do not have attachment for them, then there is no way you will be angry when you see your loved ones suffer.

It is just like the example of your neighbour's house catching fire. If there is nothing flammable in your house, the fire in your neighbour's house will not be able to do much damage to your house. The only reason your house can burn down is if your house is filled with flammable objects. If you throw those flammable objects away, your house will not burn.

Likewise if there is no attachment for your loved ones and the people who matter to you, you will not be affected by their anger.

These are the ways to stop anger from arising in our mind. In this context here, the way to stop anger is to remove the attachment in our mind.

Next is purifying the causes for the hells by tolerating small sufferings.

*2. Accepting small sufferings will act to overcome the cause for the suffering of the hells*

*A. Example*

Verse 6.72

Is it not excellent if a man condemned to death  
Is released after having his hand cut off?  
Is it not excellent if I am spared from hell  
By way of human suffering?

*B. Meaning*

Verse 6.73

If I cannot endure  
Even just this suffering of the present,  
Then why do I not refrain from getting angry,  
The cause of suffering in hell?

What did we say earlier? We often get upset when our loved ones are harmed. We get upset because of our attachment. So the solution is not to have attachment.

Of course this is unacceptable for people, "How is it possible not to have attachment? You are asking me to give up attachment? That means you are asking me to give up my emotional bond and connection with these people. In that sense, it is separating me from them, making the clear distinction that we are not connected.

That is something I cannot do. I cannot bear to be separated from my loved ones. I cannot bear to be disconnected from my loved ones. I cannot bear not to have this emotional bond with them.

As such, in order to be emotionally bonded and connected with them, obviously there must be some kind of attachment to them. Therefore I must have attachment. It is necessary. So when they are harmed, I don't like it and it is justifiable for me to get upset because this is what I need to do."

This is what people think.

But the pain of separation from your loved ones is relatively small compared to the suffering that you have to experience if you were to get upset for their sake. If you practise patience and voluntarily accept that suffering—the discomfort that comes along with this feeling of disconnectedness from your loved ones because you are not attached to them—that suffering is small. You should voluntarily put up with it because you are saving yourself from the suffering of more samsara in the future. In particular, you are saving yourself from the great suffering of being born in the hell realms that is the result of getting upset and acting out of anger.

We have to make a distinction between short-term pain and long-term pain. It is about choosing short-term pain and tolerating and putting up with it. Otherwise there will be great long-term pain.

Verse 6.73 is telling us that if we cannot tolerate the harm that we experience or the harm that is directed at our loved ones, then how are we able to tolerate the suffering of the lower realms such as the suffering of the hells in the future? How are we able to tolerate the great suffering of the hells if we claim, "This present suffering is too much. I cannot tolerate the harm done to me and I cannot tolerate the fact that my loved ones are being harmed"?

If you retaliate with anger, the question is, "Will you be able to tolerate the consequences of that act of retaliation that is primarily driven by attachment?" It is because of being driven by attachment that you get upset and retaliate. Then the consequences will be rebirth in the lower realms, in particular, the hell realms. Will you be able to tolerate that result of following after your anger or not?

Therefore as such, you have to turn away from the causes of the lower realms. Essentially these are our afflictions such as anger.

*3. It is reasonable to enjoy hardships that accomplish greater purposes*

*A. Feeling regret for how many bodies we have wasted in the past and still not accomplished either our own or other's welfares*

Verse 6.74

For the sake of my desires  
I experienced thousands [of eons] in hell,  
But I enacted the purpose  
Of neither others nor myself.

Verse 6.73 is something that we can think about whenever we think that we cannot tolerate the harm-doer or the harm that is done to us.

~~~~~

Question: Are there bodhisattvas who get angry but will not have their roots of virtue destroyed but only experience a delay in their realisations?

Answer: The postponement of the realisations of the path *is* the result of the destruction of the roots of virtue.

(A student revives the discussion pertaining to whether at the time of death, a person can accumulate the projecting karma that can become the actualising karma or not).

Student: During the time of death, projecting karma cannot be created because at the time of death, it is karma not accumulated due to the short period of time. Can or not?

Khen Rinpoche: Cannot! You say, “short period of time.” What do you mean by “short period of time”?

Student: Because projecting karma has to be karma that is accumulated and karma that is accumulated has to be karma created over a long period of time.

Khen Rinpoche: My question back to you. If you were to think that you want to kill someone for about ten seconds, is that long enough for karma to be created or not?

(Further discussion between Khen Rinpoche and the student as to the meaning of “long period of time.”)

Student: My understanding of “long period of time” is that it should be more than one moment.

Khen Rinpoche: At the time of death, you have more than one moment! It may be longer than ten seconds but you can have two minutes, five minutes, isn't it? What is your understanding of “long period of time”? One year, one month, one day?

If you were to think strongly for say, ten minutes, five minutes, “I am going to kill this person,” do you create karma or not?

(Student ponders this).

Khen Rinpoche: Do you create karma in five minutes or not? OK. Five minutes is too short. I give you ten minutes, lah!

You think you can create karma in ten minutes?

Student: Yes.

Khen Rinpoche: Five minutes?

Student: Yes.

Khen Rinpoche: Three minutes?

Student: Die already. Yes.

Khen Rinpoche: Two minutes?

Student: Yes.

Khen Rinpoche: One minute?

Student: Yes. Every moment we are creating karma. (Uproar in class).

(Student still insists that although karma is created, that may not necessarily be karma accumulated).

Khen Rinpoche: Your reason that the time is too short does not answer the question.

Question: When karma is about to be ripened, can it be reversed or can it be nullified, i.e., can it be stopped?

Khen Rinpoche: It is possible. It can be reversed. It can be stopped.

Student 2: If that karma can be stopped, then it being nourished by craving and grasping can also be stopped. In other words, at the time of nourishing with craving and grasping, there is a projecting karma that is about to manifest. But this projecting karma can be stopped or reversed.

If this karma can be reversed during the time of craving and grasping, at that time, one generates a powerful positive mind of virtuous faith, for example. That leaves a powerful imprint on the causal period consciousness. Because the earlier karma has been reversed, a second set of craving and grasping can nourish this latter karma. Is that possible?

If that is the case, then this means at the time of death, the karma can be changed at the time of nourishing. That karma can be reversed.

Khen Rinpoche: Yes. I think so. Why not?

Student 2: Then we have settled the issue.

Khen Rinpoche: We have settled the issue?

Student 2: During the time of craving and grasping, a projecting karma is being nourished. But it is possible for that karma to be reversed?

Khen Rinpoche: I think so.

Student 2: At that time there can be a virtuous mind that leaves a powerful imprint in the causal period consciousness. Immediately after that, it can be nourished by a second set of craving and grasping.

The previous projecting karma was perhaps a non-virtuous projecting karma. The second projecting karma was perhaps a virtuous projecting karma. In other words, at the time of dying, we were supposed to be reborn in the hells but because of this being reversed by the second projecting karma, we can be reborn in a higher realm.

Khen Rinpoche: Yes. So you are saying that, at the time of death, you can create projecting karma and actualising karma?

Student 2: When it is nourished by craving and grasping, that projecting karma becomes actualising karma.

Khen Rinpoche: At the time of death, we can create both?

(Student 2 restates his position).

Khen Rinpoche: According to the lower Abhidharma, the *Abidharmakosha* by Vasubandhu, once you are in the intermediate state of a particular realm, that is irreversible. Once that intermediate state comes about due to the nourishing of a karma by craving and grasping, once a certain kind of intermediate state is established, it is irreversible. So once you are in the intermediate state of the hell realms, you are definitely going to hell. There is no way out. You will go down.

But according to Asanga's higher Abhidharma, the *Compendium of Knowledge*, it is said that even if the bardo is established and you have entered the intermediate state of a particular realm, if very strong virtue is accumulated for whatever reason, then that intermediate state can be changed.

I think we talked about this earlier some time ago.

If we follow the position of the *Compendium of Knowledge*, the higher Abhidharma, i.e., that the intermediate state can be reversed, it goes without saying that at the time of craving and grasping, the karma that is being nourished can be reversed. It can be reversed as in it can change to another karma that is being nourished.

Student 3: Previously I asked this question, "At the time of death, if a projecting karma is non-virtuous but at the same time, one has single-pointed faith in one's guru. Could that non-virtuous karma be changed?" I remember the answer was that that single-pointed faith was a condition, not karma and that the non-virtuous projecting karma could *not* be changed.

How then does that karma become reversible if, say, a single-pointed faith is only a condition and not karma?.

Khen Rinpoche: At the time of death, one would be going to a lower realm but due to the condition of faith, another karma comes into play. It is not that the earlier non-virtuous karma has transformed into a virtuous karma. No!

It is not possible for a non-virtuous karma to transform into a virtuous karma. That is not the meaning when we say that karma has changed.

Student 3: In other words, at the time of death, one has this non-virtuous projecting karma but due to the condition of having this single-pointed faith in one's guru, this non-virtuous karma is somehow replaced by a fresh virtuous karma. Hence the rebirth will be a favourable one. Can I understand it to be like that?

Khen Rinpoche: Yes.

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