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 37 26 June 2014

CHAPTER SIX: VERSES 6.74 - 6.83.

- B. Arresting fury towards those who wrong those dear to oneself
 - 2. Arresting it by means of the patience that pays no heed to those who cause harm (V. 6.74 V. 6.75)
- C. Arresting fury towards those who do well by one's enemies
 - 1. Abandoning impatience with the praise and renown of one's enemies (V. 6.76 V. 6.79)
 - 2. Abandoning impatience with the accomplishment of our enemies' pleasure (V. 6.80)
 - 3. Abandoning impatience with the accomplishment of material gain (V. 6.81 V. 6.83)

I believe I mentioned this in the past. There is a quotation from the sutras that mentions how much merit one gets if one make offerings of food and clothing for eons equaling the number of grains of sand in the Ganges River. That merit, of course, is huge.

But comparing that merit to the merit of just hearing the name, "Buddha," or seeing the representations of the Buddha in the form of a painting, statue and so forth, the latter merit that one accumulates is so much greater than the earlier example.

Basically it is saying how much opportunity we now have to accumulate so much merit just by hearing the name, "Buddha," or just by seeing the representations of the Buddha in the form of holy objects. If we can accumulate so much merit just by hearing the name, "Buddha," or just by seeing the representations of the Buddha in the form of the holy objects such as statues, paintings and so forth, then it goes without saying how much more merit we will accumulate, if out of faith, we were to put our palms together and pay homage to the Buddha or praise his qualities verbally.

If that is the case, then by extension, the fact that we have the opportunity to come into contact with these instructions that show the stages of proceeding towards omniscience or enlightenment, a path that is praised by all the buddhas, to educate ourselves with these instructions and, on top of that, to analyse and reflect on them, the merit we accumulate from doing all this will be even greater than the earlier examples.

That is why I have always mentioned the need to read your text. By reading the text and educating yourself, you can see how much benefit you can get from these examples. So it is important to read the text. On the basis of reading the text, if you

are able to analyse and think about what you have read, then of course the benefit is really great.

The essential point I am trying to make here is that you should keep in mind the benefits of and the purpose of your studies. You have to educate yourself by continually reading your text. As you read, you have to analyse and think about what you have read. By doing so, you plant imprints in your mind. It is important to plant stable imprints. As I mentioned before, you plant imprints from merely reading the text. You plant imprints when you reflect on and analyse the teachings. You also plant imprints when you familiarise yourself with the teachings through meditation.

The imprints of the latter are superior to the former, i.e., the imprints from reflection and meditation are superior to those from hearing and so forth. At this time, you still have this human life and having met the Buddha's teachings, you must try your best to place as many stable imprints in your mind as possible.

Recently we had quite an extensive discussion of the twelve links of dependent origination. From this, you can see it is vital to plant good and stable imprints while you are still alive. If you haven't done that, yet you expect that you can suddenly think of something virtuous at the time of death that can be nourished and ripened, this will be quite far-fetched. It is not impossible but it is difficult. If one cannot plant imprints while the mind is clear, it is going to be even more difficult at the time of death.

So while one is still alive and the mind is still fresh, it is important to plant as many stable imprints on the mind as possible. Only then at the time of death can there be a really good chance of getting a good rebirth because of the familiarity one has cultivated with virtue.

At this time when you are still alive, you can put your mind to good use as it is still fresh and alert. If you cannot figure out things such as how to plant imprints and so forth, how is it then possible to do so at the time of death? If you cannot do it now when your mind is clear, then at the time of death when the mind is disturbed and so forth, how is that possible? To say, "I don't do anything now but at the time of death, it will happen," that is a bit far-fetched. I wonder how that is possible. The point here is that while you are alive, as much as possible, work continuously at learning, educating yourself, practising and so forth to plant stable imprints.

If we think about craving, I don't think craving starts only at the time of death. It starts when you are alive. We are talking about the craving that nourishes the karma. I don't think that craving starts at the time of death. Craving has already started in this life.

There are the projecting causes and the projected results. The four projected results are name and form, the six sources, contact and feeling. When the four projected results come into being, I would think that craving already starts. We have craving already because we have the projected result of feeling—pleasant feelings and unpleasant feelings. We desire pleasant feelings and we don't like unpleasant feelings. When pleasurable feelings arise, there is craving for them. This is how the

craving that nourishes comes about. That is when it is call nourishment.

We don't like suffering. Because of attachment and craving, we want to be free from suffering. Also when we are alive, we have this feeling that we have come into existence. We do not want to lose this existence. We say that we do not want to lose this body, we do not want to be parted from this body. That is also due to craving. Through this craving alone, we accumulate so much fresh karma.

What about grasping? Grasping arises primarily during the time of death. It is a stronger form of craving that manifests mainly at the time of death. If we look at how this is phrased, that it manifests, 'primarily at the time of death,' from that perhaps we can say that there could be instances when there could also be grasping *before* death.

The main point is, "How does actualising karma manifest? What is the process?" At the time of accumulating projecting karma, when that is finished, something is left on the causal time consciousness. Simply speaking, a karmic seed, an imprint is planted on this mind. From then on, there is no projecting karma. The projecting karma is finished, i.e., it is done.

But how does this projecting karma transform into or manifest as the actualising karma? What is this process? How does it come about? This is a question for everyone.

You all already understand the 12 links?

Khen Rinpoche: You have already graduated (from the first round of the Basic Program).

That is why it is important to think about karma. There are so many things for you to think about. It is not enough to just say, "I have heard this. It is like that." You need to think about it until you get a decisive and definite ascertainment, "Yes, it is like this and not like that." In order to reach such ascertainment, you need to understand this topic and in order to understand it, you really need to think about it from many angles and ask questions.

Karma that is accumulated is karma whose results you will definitely experience. In order to experience the results of the karma that is accumulated, must that karma be complete in the sense of having all the four elements of the basis, attitude, performance and completion?

For example, the karma of killing is the karma that is accumulated. In order to experience the result of this karma of killing that is accumulated, in order for that karma of killing to be powerful enough to issue forth an effect so that you will experience the result, must the act of killing be completed? The definition of completion is that the person dies before you do.

This is not wasting time. This is a very important exercise that everybody should be involved in. You have to focus on this. Why yes? Why no?

Student 1: For karma to be accumulated, it doesn't have to be completed.

Khen Rinpoche: You said the lam-rim says it doesn't need to be completed? Are you sure? Where does the text say that it doesn't have to be complete?

Student 1: (Reading from the Lam Rim Chen Mo^1):

Karma that you have accumulated is that not included among the following ten types of actions: actions done in dreams, ... those done without wanting to ...

So anything that is other than these ten instances is karma accumulated but they do not have to be completed.

Khen Rinpoche: That is not the question. Let's say there is the karma of killing. For completion, the victim must die before you do. Where does it say that you do not need completion?

Student 1: It doesn't say nor does it say.

Khen Rinpoche: Where does it say, "the karma that is accumulated but it is not completed"?

Student 1: It doesn't say nor does it say.

Khen Rinpoche: So in order for the karma of killing to be karma that is accumulated, do you need all these four factors of the attitude and so forth?

Student 2: You do not.

Khen Rinpoche: If you say you do not need all four, then give me an example. Which one among the four is not needed—basis, attitude, performance or completion? To make it simple, we refer to the (1) motivation, (2) performance and (3) completion of the act.

Student 2: You need the motivation but you do not need performance and completion.

Khen Rinpoche: Give an illustration of what you have just said: a karma of killing that is karma accumulated just based on having the motivation.

Student 2: I'm motivated by anger. I wanted to kill Peter but ended up killing John.

(Student changes her mind). I think performance is needed but you don't need to identify the object correctly and you do not need completion.

¹ Page 241, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment* by Tsong-kha-pa, Volume One, Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca, New York. Copyright © 2000 Tibetan Buddhist Learning Center.

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Student 3: I will use an example where a non-virtuous motivation is not required for killing. In the case of the bodhisattva who killed the sailor, the motivation to kill is not non-virtuous. He performed the act of killing and actually experienced its result in the end by being reborn in the hells for a short time. So this is a case of killing that does not have the four factors because the motivation is not totally non-virtuous but it does result in a rebirth in the hell realm. So this is a case where there is killing that is accumulated, producing a result but which did not need all the four factors.

Khen Rinpoche: When you kill, you accumulate negative karma. Did that bodhisattva accumulate negative karma or not?

Student 3: Yes, he did.

Khen Rinpoche: It follows that you can accumulate negative karma motivated by a good motivation.

Student 3: Uh-oh. I pass this one!

Let me give another example. Nagarjuna was supposed to live for 600 years but he was killed by someone who used a blade of grass to cut off his head. That was because in the past when he was cutting grass, he accidentally killed an ant whose head was cut off by a blade of grass. He didn't have the motivation of killing the ant yet he had to experience the result of having his own head cut off². That is a case where there is no non-virtuous motivation involved yet he experienced the result of having his head cut off.

Is that not a case of not having all the four factors, i.e., there is no motivation in the killing and yet he had to experience the result?

Khen Rinpoche: In this case, there is performance and completion.

Student 3: But there is no non-virtuous motivation.

Khen Rinpoche: This is an example of a karma that is created (or done) but not accumulated.

In order to be a karma that is accumulated, do you need all three: motivation, performance and completion?

In order for it to be covetousness, you need all three factors:

- 1. the basis of the action
- 2. the performance
- 3. the completion

Even if all three factors are present, it doesn't manifest in a physical or verbal way. But through the coming together of the basis, performance and completion, then one

² Ven. Gyurme corrected this story with another version: Nagarjuna's brother wanted to inherit the kingdom. Since Nagarjuna had such a long lifespan and could not die, the only way he could die was to cut off his own head with a blade of grass.

accumulates karma.

In the case of covetousness, in order for it to be complete, you need the motivation, performance and completion. What is posited as the completion of covetousness?

Student 2: The thought that I will make that particular thing I covet mine. I make that decision.

Khen Rinpoche: That was well said. Everybody must remember that. What is posited as the performance of covetousness?

Student 4: A strong desire to have the thing.

Student 5: According to this book (student refers to *Path to Enlightenment in Tibetan Buddhism* by Geshe Acharya Thubten Loden), it seems that covetousness is mainly mental action. You just need to think about it to trigger off covetousness. There seems to be only one component.

Ven Gyurme (clarifies the question): There are three factors: motivation, the performance and completion. These three constitute a complete act of covetousness. So what is posited as the performance?

Student 4: The motivation is the strong desire for the object. The motivation becomes stronger. That is the performance. Once you have decided that this is mine, then that is the completion.

Khen Rinpoche: That is well said.

Student 5: You need the intention. There is no mental action without any intention to think about it. (Student quotes from his book): "There is no such thing as mental action that is not done intentionally because you are forced to do it by someone else."

Khen Rinpoche: The motivation of covetousness is posited as the thought wanting to have an object that belongs to somebody else. That is posited as the motivation—just that thought of wanting to have that object that belongs to someone else.

Essentially covetousness is the continuity of a similar thought with the intensity of that thought increasing.

- In the beginning, you have the thought, the motivation. You see something that belongs to someone else. Then you think, "I want that object."
- That thought then grows stronger and stronger until it reaches the point where it is performed.
- You reached the point where you think decisively, "I really want this. How wonderful it would be if this object is mine." That is the completion.

So it is a continuous stream of a similar thought.

When you have the motivation, performance and completion, you have the complete act of covetousness in dependence on which you accumulate karma. We are *not* saying that covetousness is karma. It is not. But through a complete act of

covetousness, which is an affliction, based on that, then you accumulate karma.

- In terms of the karma of killing, to be a karma that is accumulated but not done, you have the motivation to kill.
- Then the thought becomes stronger and stronger. You are thinking, "I *really* want to kill this person." Let's say we use the term, performance, for this.
- Then you reach that point in time where you mentally decide, "I *am* going to kill this person." Perhaps we can use the term, completion, for this phase.

In that sense, you have the motivation, performance and completion. Perhaps it is through this process that the karma of killing is accumulated but not done. This is what I think.

In order for the karma of killing to be a karma of that is accumulated but not done, initially there must be the thought or intention to kill. This intention then grows stronger and it reaches the point where you think, "I am going to kill this person." I think that when you reach this point, it becomes the karma of killing, that is, a karma that is accumulated that will definitely bring about a result.

The teachings classify killing as physical or bodily karma among the three non-virtues of the body and four of the speech. Also the teachings posit that the completion of an act of killing is the death of the victim who has to die before you.

You have to think about this.

Back to the question about the manifesting of actualising karma. How does it manifest? When does craving nourish the karma?

From this exercise, you can see that things are not so straightforward. You can just look at them superficially and accept, "It is like that." But if you really think deeply about the subject, there are so many questions. You cannot actually say with certainty that you know the subject. That requires constant thinking and analysis.

From this, you can see that you can look at the subject casually. But when you really start thinking about it, often you cannot say with confidence, "I actually know this. I actually believe in this." To reach the point where you are able to say with conviction, "It is like that. It is not like this," that is the result of having really reflected or thought about things well for some time. You really have to think and dig deep. It is only then that you can say with conviction, "It is like that. It is not like this." Only then does that make you a high quality Buddhist!

It is really important to read and think about the subject. When you have questions, bring them up in class. If you don't think about the subject, it all looks very easy, isn't it? When you think it is easy, that is when it becomes boring. You start to think, "It is boring coming to class. I just sit and listen. He talks and I listen. That is so boring."

This happens when you don't think deeply about the subject. If you just look casually look at this text, *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds*, it seems quite straightforward and easy. But when you start to think about the subjects covered, you discover that

you actually have difficulty speaking with conviction about the various topics. You don't have the confidence in your own answers when you are asked.

Here we have been talking about this chapter on patience. In order to cultivate patience to deal with anger, we have to use a whole variety of reasons. The chapter is telling us how we should think, what line of thinking is wrong, what is right and so forth. Basically, we have to see what the text is telling us and we have to think about it for ourselves.

If you don't agree with any of the reasoning that is brought up, if you have really thought about it and you disagree with it, then you must say with confidence, "I don't agree with this." You can challenge it and bring it up in class.

Even if the reason given by Shantideva is correct and valid, you have to think about it more deeply for yourself to reach the point where you are confident that it is really like that, that what the text says is really true. Without that effort on your part, this is not going to happen.

B. ARRESTING FURY TOWARDS THOSE WHO WRONG THOSE DEAR TO ONESELF (cont'd)

- 2. Arresting it by means of the patience that pays no heed to those who cause harm
 - D. Reflecting on the benefits of this specific kind of patience
 - 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 others' 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.

Earlier on we saw how it is possible that we may raise a qualm, objecting to the idea of being emotionally parted from or not being so attached to our loved ones and the people who matter to us. We say, "I cannot bear this. It is unbearable." If there are such thoughts, then verse 6.74 is the answer to them.

In the past, out of the desire for material gain or acquiring pleasurable objects of form, sound, smell, taste, touch and so forth, we bore a lot of hardships including sacrificing our limbs. Somehow this happened due to the karma that we have created out of attachment. We have even been born in the hells and experienced so much suffering because of following after our desire and attachment.

But all those experiences of suffering were for nothing. Our desires are still not met; our own purposes and goals are not fulfilled. Nor have we fulfilled the purposes, goals or welfare of any other person. Experiencing all these problems and suffering

for so long a time has not brought about any benefit. We have not achieved anything meaningful.

If that is the case, should we not put up with the problem that we experience now that comes about through practicing patience? Why can't we put up with and tolerate those difficulties since they will bring about something greatly meaningful?

B. It is reasonable to enjoy accomplishing the welfare of all migrators by being patient with present hardships

Verse 6.75
But now since great purpose will be established
From harm which is not as much,
I should be solely joyful
Towards such suffering that dispels the harms of migrating beings.

By being patient with and voluntarily accepting the suffering we experience as a human being, we will be able to avoid the suffering of the lower realms such as the suffering of the hells. As such, our suffering is not great and is nothing compared to the suffering of the hells.

As mentioned earlier, we should put up with and voluntarily accept the problems and suffering that we experience, seeing this as a method to purify the negativities that we have accumulated in the past and using those experiences of suffering to persuade ourselves to accumulate virtue, the cause of happiness. As such, therefore, it is reasonable and appropriate for us to meditate on and cultivate patience.

This concludes the section that talks about the need for us to be patient when the people who matter to us are harmed.

The next section is about stopping ourselves from being angry at those who benefit our enemies. Why do we need to do that? Because since it is the cause for one's own happiness, it is suitable for us to want to do that.

C. ARRESTING FURY TOWARDS THOSE WHO DO WELL BY ONE'S ENEMIES

Abandoning impatience with the praise and renown of one's enemies

 As it is the cause of one's own happiness, it is reasonable to wish for such Verse 6.76
 Should others find joyous happiness
 By praising someone having excellent qualities,
 Why, mind, do you not praise him too
 And be joyful?

Verse 6.77
That joyous happiness of yours
Is a source of joy without misdeed,
Permitted by those having excellent qualities
And is also a supreme means for gathering others.

When our enemy is praised, the person who is praising our enemy also feels happy in doing so. As such, since that person is happy when he praises our enemy, likewise, shouldn't we also praise our enemy? The argument here is that if we see that, then why is it that we do not also praise our enemy?

The point this verse is driving at is that when we see someone praising our enemy, we shouldn't be disturbed. If we praise our enemy or the person we dislike, we will also experience happiness in the heart. That happiness is the highest kind of happiness. It is the kind of happiness and joy that pleases all the buddhas and bodhisattvas. It is the best kind of speech that makes others happy. In so doing, that is how we bring people into our fold. Instead of being jealous, by praising the enemy or the people we don't like, this is said to be the best way to make the person like us or to make the person come into our fold.

- B. As it is the cause of others' happiness, it is unreasonable to not wish for it
- 1. If you do not want others to be happy, your own happiness will decline Verse 6.78

Furthermore, it is said that others will be happy in this way.

If you do not want this happiness,

Then you should stop giving wages and the like.

Thus you would be adversely affected both in this and future lives.

This verse is saying that if we do not wish for others to be happy, our own happiness will deteriorate.

Our normal reaction is that we don't like to praise our enemy or the people that we dislike because of jealousy. We cannot tolerate the fact that the enemy will be happy if we praise him.

Earlier on, we had established that if we can praise the enemy without jealousy, we ourselves would be happy. But now, we are the ones who are stopping ourselves from being happy by not praising the enemy. We are stopping our own happiness on account of the reason that he will be happy if we praised him and we do not want him to be happy.

If that is the case, then this is the same as not paying your staff wages because when you pay them their wages, you will make your staff happy. Since paying your staff would make them happy, if you don't want them to be happy, then you should stop paying your staff.

But when you do not pay your staff, you will be really unhappy because you will get a lot of problems in this life. They will make many problems for you. That is the visible effect that you can see in this life.

And because of depriving your staff their salaries, even in your future lives, you will not have possessions and so forth because not paying your staff wages is a kind of stealing.

Next is if we do not wish others to have happiness then our own happiness will degenerate.

2. Thus, it is reasonable to wish for others to be happy Verse 6.79
When people describe my own good qualities
I want others to be happy too,
But when they describe the good qualities of others
I do not even wish them to be happy.

We will be elated and very happy if our enemies were to praise us. In fact we also want that to happen. But when we see another person praising our enemy, we do not like it. That is really a very mistaken way of looking at things.

We feel happy when others praise us, including when our enemy praise us. Just as we want that praise, so it is entirely appropriate to feel happy when others are praised, including our enemy because they also want to be happy. They also experience happiness when they are praised. They also want to be praised.

When our enemy or somebody we don't like praises us, we feel good and happy. We like it and we want it. We should remember that experience. Just as we want to be treated in such a way, when others are praised, including our enemies, we should also wish them well.

2. Abandoning impatience with the accomplishment of our enemies' pleasureVerse 6.80Having generated the mind of enlightenmentThrough wishing all sentient beings to be happy,Why do you become angryIf sentient beings find happiness themselves?

Most people here have taken great empowerments with the bodhisattva vows and some even have tantric vows. When you take these vows, you are making a pledge to achieve the highest unsurpassed state of full enlightenment in order to place all sentient beings in that state as well. That was the pledge and the oath most of you took—to achieve omniscience in order to accomplish the welfare of all sentient beings—during the time of the initiation.

Here in this context, we are talking primarily about those we consider to be our enemies and the people we dislike. Without you having to make any effort, the enemy is experiencing these kinds of happiness—becoming more powerful, more well-known, having more possessions and so forth. All these good things are happening to him without us having to do anything at all. In other words, he has achieved the happiness that you had promised to give him. He is achieving all this happiness without you having to lift a finger.

The question that is now directed at you is this: Why should you be upset when that happens to your enemy? That is the question that you have to ask yourself.

Therefore a person who is seriously and sincerely working to actualise the pledge he had taken to help all sentient beings, such a person would not get upset when she sees others achieving these different kinds of happiness. This is especially so if they had achieved such happiness on their own without her having to do anything at all. She should not get upset at all. In fact, when she sees others achieving such happiness on their own, she should feel even happier.

Verse 6.80 is about abandoning our intolerance when we see the enemy gaining some kind of happiness.

Verse 6.81 is giving up such intolerance with regard to our enemies getting some material gain, possessions or wealth. When we see that happening, we should also not be intolerant.

- 3. Abandoning impatience with the accomplishment of material gain
 - A. Reflecting on how it accomplishes one's own desires
 - 1. It is reasonable for oneself to enjoy sentient beings' accomplishment of material gains

Verse 6.81
If I wish for all sentient beings to become
Buddhas worshipped by the three worlds,
Then why am I tormented
Due to seeing them receiving just vile gain and honor?

People who have taken the bodhisattva vows, such as ourselves, are those who are working to make every sentient being a buddha who is worshipped and honoured by all kinds of praise and offerings in the three realms. This is what we are working for.

If that is the case, then why are we upset when we see our enemies or the people that we don't like getting some praise, material gain or receiving some offerings? Why are we so upset? Why do we dislike that? Why are we jealous? In fact, it is inappropriate to be jealous.

Aren't most of us like that? When the people we dislike are happy, we don't like it. When something good happens to them, we don't like it. Often this has to do with jealousy. So the teachings are asking us, "What do you get out of that? What purpose is there to feeling that way?"

Next is using an example to illustrate this point.

2. Example
Verse 6.82
If relatives for whom you are caring
And to whom you practice giving
Are able to find their own livelihood,
Would you not be happy, rather than angry?

If we do not wish for our enemies to be happy, to receive material gain and so forth, the bodhicitta that we had generated will decline.

3. If one does not want that, bodhicitta will deteriorate
Verse 6.83
What [kind of person] wishes enlightenment for migrating beings
If he does not wish for them to have even this?
And where is there a mind of enlightenment
In him who becomes angry at the wealth of others?

How is it possible for someone to generate bodhicitta—the thought to achieve omniscience in order to accomplish the welfare of all sentient beings—when he cannot even tolerate others receiving some small little profit or gain?

For someone who has that kind of jealousy and negative competitiveness and who is at the same time very attached to money, possessions and so forth, the teachings are asking, "How is it possible for such a person to develop bodhicitta?"

Even if such a person adopts bodhicitta, won't that bodhicitta degenerate? As such, that person's merit will also decline.

So far, this particular section is saying that there is no way to develop bodhicitta if we cannot wish for our enemies to have even some small happiness. If we cannot even tolerate them having some small benefit or profit, then there is no way we can develop bodhicitta.

What is the essential point here? The essence is not to be upset and jealous with our enemies when they are doing well, gaining some respect or material gain. We shouldn't let our mind be disturbed by this.

We cannot tolerate other people doing well, especially enemies, primarily because of jealousy. But why are we jealous in the first place? Because we ourselves want respect, material gain and so forth. That is the condition. Therefore when we see others having these things, we cannot accept it. When we see other people respecting our enemy, honouring him and giving him things, we cannot bear it. The mind is really deeply disturbed. That is what we call jealousy. That is what jealousy is. Essentially here, this section of the teachings is telling us, "Don't be jealous!"

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