

**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 39**22 July 2014****CHAPTER SIX: VERSES 6.96 - 6.111.**

3. Arresting fury towards that which hinders one's desires
 - B. It is unreasonable to be impatient with that which hinders the benefit directed towards oneself and one's interests
 1. It is unreasonable to be furious with that which hinders mundane interests (V. 6.96 – V. 101)
 2. It is unreasonable to be furious with that which hinders merit (V. 6.102 – V. 6.111)

LAM-RIM MEDITATION PROGRAMME

For those of you who are in the lam-rim meditation programme, although you are now meditating on the topic of the human life of freedoms and endowments and death and impermanence, nevertheless you must not forget what you have meditated on earlier, the topic on correctly devoting to the virtuous friend.

On a daily basis, at least you must remind yourself in an abbreviated way, either through reflecting on it or through reading the topic of guru devotion.

When you signed up for the program, it was a rule from the beginning that you have to meditate on the relevant topics every day without fail. That is important. You have to work at that and you have to make sure that you do it. I think there are some people who have broken that commitment but that should not be the reason to discontinue the practice.

Although you may miss one or two days, nevertheless you should generate the determination to continue. What else is there to do other than to continue? If you do not continue because you did not do it for a day or two and you allow yourself to carry on like that, then the day or two will become weeks and months.

It is the same with coming to classes to continue with your education here. Doesn't the same thing apply here? After you stopped coming for a short while, then it is very easy to stop coming to class altogether. Therefore from your side, try to make sure that you continue your learning.

Here we are studying this text, *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds*. In a way, it is not a difficult text. It is quite easy to understand and quite straightforward. It is not really

intellectually challenging. However there are many useful advice in this text. Even if you can't manage to practise all of them, at least you can find something that is applicable, useful and helpful for you. You then focus on those sections. On the basis of what is written in this text, you can reflect on those verses that you find relevant to you and then integrate them into your life.

From my side, I also find it quite difficult to teach this text. If I were to give you just some short explanations, we would be able to finish the text quite quickly. For example, the next chapter on joyous perseverance, if we were to just go through the verses in class and highlight some points here and there, we could finish that chapter in two or three lessons. But I don't see much benefit in doing that because you probably will not be able to understand much at the end of it.

On the other hand, if I were to explain in detail each and every single verse, then we will never ever finish. I also see that some of you are probably getting tired of studying this text. It appears to me that some of you are getting sick of it.

It is like having to practise patience in studying this chapter on patience because the chapter on patience never ever seems to end. But if you think about it, actually in reality, this text is an indispensable text for real practice. Ideally it is meant for integration into your life. Every single line that makes up these verses is advice that you can practise and work on. Ideally you need to have that kind of enthusiasm to be able to really read and analyse each verse, think about it and try to utilise the advice in those verses. Ideally it should be like that because this text is meant for practice.

From your side, when you listen to the explanations, you really have to focus and pay attention. From my side, I am trying to explain the text in accordance with what Shantideva intended on the basis of some commentaries to this text. I'm not making this up. So along the way, if perhaps you find some of my explanations incorrect, you should bring them up in class so we can have some discussion about them.

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In terms of the things that we like and the things that we don't like, if we expand on them, we can talk about the twelve situations or objects that we desire and the twelve situations or objects that we don't desire.

With respect to the situations or objects that we desire, if there is anything that interferes with these things that we want to happen to us or want to acquire, then we get upset. Of the many things that we desire, one of them is praise. We like to be praised.

Now we are at that particular section about why it is inappropriate to be attached to praise. Having said that, perhaps one may justify oneself wanting praise by saying, "If I'm praised, it causes happiness in others."

#### **1. IT IS UNREASONABLE TO BE FURIOUS WITH THAT WHICH HINDERS MUNDANE INTERESTS (cont'd)**

A. *It is unreasonable to be furious with that which hinders one's own praise and renown*

4. *The reasons why it is erroneous*

B. *If, because of the joy one associates with them, praise and renown were something to strive for, then it would be reasonable for all beings who have that to enjoy them*

1. *The actual*

Verse 6.96

If I am happy due to his happiness,  
Then I must act similarly towards all.  
And if this were so then why am I unhappy  
When others are happy due to joy?

We may justify our attachment to praise by saying, "When somebody praises me, the person who is praising me is happy doing so. I am happy that he is happy." If that is what you think, then your argument should also be applied to the situation when your enemy is praised. When your enemy is praised, you would have to accept that the person who is praising your enemy is also happy doing so. But when your enemy is praised, you don't like it and you also don't like the person who is praising your enemy.

Going by your argument, if you really feel happy for the person who is praising you because she is happy doing so, likewise you should extend your happiness to the person who is praising your enemy or the people that you don't like.

The next verse talks about how childish we are when we are praised. When somebody praises us, we get so excited and happy. That is actually very childish behaviour.

2. *Dismissing the joy of praise for oneself as child's play*

Verse 6.97

Therefore the happiness that arises  
From thinking, "I am being praised,"  
Is thus incorrect;  
It is only the behavior of the childish.

If we analyse what exactly is the very nature or entity of this praise that we are so attached to, in fact, there is no essence and nothing really meaningful to it. Because the praise that we are so attached to do not have the slightest meaning or essence, therefore being attached to being praised is the behaviour of a childish person.

What we like is praise and good reputation. We are attached to them. As such, if anybody comes along and interferes with us being praised or having a good reputation, then we get very upset at those people.

The next section tells us that in fact, praise and reputation are not desirable and beneficial but rather they are harmful.

We like to be praised and we like to have a good reputation. If anybody comes along and interferes with that, we get very upset with that person. In fact, this section is telling us that it is inappropriate to be upset with the person who interferes with us being praised or having a good reputation.

*B. Reflecting on the benefits*

*1. As that which acts to hinder praise and renown also arrests the lower realms, it is unreasonable to be furious with it*

*A. Grasping after praise and renown leads to the development of all wrongdoing*

Verse 6.98

Praise and the like distract me

And also destroy my disillusionment.

I start to envy those who have excellent qualities

And success is destroyed.

This verse is talking about the faults of being attached to praise and the faults of being attached to good reputation. Praise and good reputation are not necessarily helpful for a real practitioner. From the perspective of a real practitioner, perhaps it is better not to be attached to praise and good reputation. Why? Because when one is attached to praise and good reputation, one starts to get distracted. They would also lead to arrogance and the developing of pride.

We are very attached to material gain, praise, reputation and so forth. The level of distraction in our lives is commensurate with the intensity of the attachment we have for these things. The more attached we are to them, the more time and effort we would put into looking for and running after them. That is how distractions happen. The more attachment we have to fame, praise, good reputation, material gain and so forth, the more distracted we become because we have to focus our time and effort into achieving these things.

We physically come under the control and the influence of the eight worldly dharmas. As the eight worldly dharmas fill up our lives, there is no space and time left for real Dharma practice. The more attached we are to objects of desire or objects of enjoyment, the less disillusionment and disenchantment we will be able to generate with regard to cyclic existence or samsara.

Even if we do manage to generate some disenchantment or disillusionment with cyclic existence—we are able to see the truth of samsara—but because of our attachment to objects of desire, that small disenchantment or disillusionment will dissipate. The weaker our disenchantment and disenchantment, the more difficulty we will experience in subduing our mind through meditation. We will find ourselves unable to meditate. In the end, even engaging in some virtue with our body and speech will also become difficult.

Here the verse is also saying that being praised and having a good reputation are the conditions that could cause us to start entertaining negative thoughts of competitiveness with those who have some good qualities. Attachment to praise and good reputation will lead us into being jealous of others who have some good

qualities. When jealousy creeps in, we are unable to bear the fact that there are others who have good qualities. We want to compete with them. We are unable to bear that there are others who may be better than us. When there is jealousy, anger comes into the picture as well. Then we get upset.

As mentioned earlier in the text, when anger arises, we destroy the happiness of this life and our future lives. Therefore verse 6.98 is telling us the faults of being attached to praise and good reputation.

The next verse talks about how the people who obstruct us from being praised and having a good reputation are actually those who are stopping us from going to the lower realms.

*B. That which acts to arrest that [also] arrests the lower realms*

Verse 6.99

Therefore, are not those who are closely involved  
In destroying my praise and the like  
Also engaged in protecting me  
From falling into the unfortunate realms?

In verse 6.98, we saw the many faults and disadvantages that come from attachment to praise and reputation. As such, isn't the person who is obstructing us from being praised and having a good reputation actually protecting us from falling into the lower realms? Isn't that person stopping us from falling into the hells? Isn't that person very kind?

Attachment to praise and good reputation brings about so many problems that will lead us to the lower realms. The effect of being attached to praise and good reputation is the suffering that includes suffering in the lower realms. So isn't the person who is stopping us from experiencing the effects of being attached to praise and good reputation stopping us from going to the lower realms?

If you analyse and really think about this, that is really the case. That is the conclusion. In fact the person who is obstructing and causing us not to be praised and having a good reputation is not a harm-doer but rather someone who is very kind and beneficial to us. So it is completely inappropriate to be upset and angry with this person. Rather we should repay the kindness of this person.

Likewise it is also inappropriate to be upset and angry with the person who harms us in the sense of obstructing us from being praised and having a good reputation because that person is liberating us from samsara.

*2. As it is something that acts to liberate one from conditioned existence, it is unreasonable to be furious with it*

*A. As that which hinders praise and for forth acts to liberate one from conditioned existence, it is unreasonable to be furious with it*

Verse 6.100

I who seek freedom  
Do not need to be bound by material gain and honor.

So why should I be angry  
With those who free me from this bondage?

If you are really someone who from the heart aspires to be free from every suffering, then you don't need additional chains that will only bind you further to cyclic existence. In that sense, you don't need more praise and good reputation for they will only bind you further to samsara.

For someone who is really intent on achieving freedom from all suffering and liberation from cyclic existence, the person who interferes with his achievement of fame, reputation and praise is in fact his liberator who is freeing him from the chains that bind him to samsara. As such, there is no justification to be upset with the person who is causing you harm. In fact, it is appropriate and suitable to like that person.

The essence of what we have covered here so far is that we have to change our view of the harm-doer. Instead of seeing the person as a harm-doer, we need to realise that the person who obstructs and causes problems to us achieving fame, reputation and praise is someone who is very helpful to us as he is someone who is closing the door of suffering for us.

*B. As it is something that cuts the avenues of suffering, it is unreasonable to be furious with it*

Verse 6.101

Why should I be angry  
At the very doors that do not let me in,  
Which are like buddhas bestowing blessings  
To those who wish to enter the chamber of suffering?

When we talk about being patient or trying to develop patience, the cultivation of patience can only happen in a situation that involves so-called harm-doers. It is only because they exist that the cultivation of patience is possible.

What I have just said is actually meant for a later section that will be coming soon. So pay attention.

Being emotionally involved and attached to praise and good reputation opens the door for us to enter the lower realms so our attachment to praise and good reputation is the same as being attached to wanting to go to the lower realms and suffering. As such, the person who harms our attachment to praise and good reputation is in some ways like the Buddha in person coming right in front of us and stopping us from entering the door that will lead us to the lower realms.

So the person who hurts our attachment to material gain, praise and good reputation is the one who closes the door to the lower realms for us. As such, that person who we usually view to be the harm-doer is in fact someone who is kind and helpful. Therefore it is inappropriate to be angry with that person.

Up to this section here in this chapter, the text deals with how we can work with the

eight worldly dharmas; in particular, our attachment to the twelve desirable objects. Because of our attachment to these twelve desirable situations or objects, we get upset when something comes along that stops us from achieving those things. We have now completed this section.

So far we have dealt with the reasons why it is inappropriate for us to be upset with those situations or people who interfere with us achieving the things that we are attached to. Having said that, we may *still* think that there are situations where we are justified to be upset and angry. One such situation is being upset with those who interfere with us accumulating merit.

## 2. IT IS UNREASONABLE TO BE FURIOUS WITH THAT WHICH HINDERS MERIT

A. *It is unreasonable to be furious because merit has been hindered*

1. *One should abide by the supreme austerity*

Verse 6.102

Saying, "This hinders my merit,"

With him too it is incorrect to be angry.

If there is no fortitude similar to patience

Should I not abide in that?

People may think that if their livelihood or the source of material gain is harmed, somehow their standard of living will also be harmed. They are prevented from getting more material resources and so they will not be able to practise as much generosity as they would like.

If somebody comes along and obstructs their business, they think, "With less material resources, now I have less money to be generous, to make offerings and also to save up to prepare for my retreat in the future. This person is actually harming me and stopping me from doing my practice. I'm not unreasonable in being upset with him." So there is some justification for you to be upset. If this is what you think, then the response to that is as follows.

In the beginning of this chapter, we have already discussed the faults of anger. We have also already covered the many benefits of patience. It is patience that overcomes anger. As one of the earlier verses said, there is no fortitude like patience (V. 6.2) and the practice of patience brings about so many benefits. Of course the virtue that is associated with the practice of patience is also very strong.

Since there is no fortitude like patience, no virtue that is comparable to patience and it is truly the antidote to anger, then if you are really aspiring to achieve merit, would it not be better to abide in patience when somebody comes and interferes with your practice of virtue?

Do you get the point? The point is that people always justify being upset in certain situations because their practice of virtue is being interrupted. Since we want merit and we like virtue so much, then we should abide in patience because that will give us the greatest merit.

*2. If that acts as a hindrance, you yourself will become an obstacle to merit*

Verse 6.103

If by my own fault  
I am not patient with this,  
Then it is only I myself hindering  
Involvement in the cause of merit.

If you are greatly upset and end up not practising patience while the object is there for you to do so, then it is you yourself who is obstructing yourself from achieving the very strong virtue and merit that comes from practising patience. The person who you usually think of as the enemy obstructing you from practising virtue is in fact not an obstruction at all.

*B. It is not a hindrance to merit.**1. A general presentation*

Verse 6.104

If without it something does not occur  
And if with it, it does come to be,  
Then since this would be the cause of it,  
How can I call it “a hindrance”?

The existence of the enemy or the harm-doer is an indispensable cause and condition for the practice of patience for without their existence, one would not be able to practise patience. As such, one will not be able to reap the benefits that come from practising patience.

Therefore this verse is saying that the enemy or the harm-doer is not an obstruction to virtue. Rather this person is very helpful for the practice of virtue for without the enemy or the harm-doer, there is no cause for the practice of patience.

*2. Establishing that by an analogy*

Verse 6.105

A beggar who came at the time  
Was not a hindrance to generosity,  
And I cannot say that those who give ordination  
Are hindrances to becoming ordained.

Let's say you really have something to give and from your own side you really want to practise generosity. You are enthusiastic about giving. In that situation, if a beggar come along and asks you for something, you will not think that the beggar is an obstacle or hindrance to your practice of generosity.

Likewise for those who wish to be ordained, there is the requirement that the abbot presiding over the ordination, the acharya, needs to be present in order for the ordination to take place and to be valid. So for someone who wants to be ordained, the acharya is not an obstacle to getting ordained.

So the point is that for someone who wants to gather virtue and merit through the practice of patience, the enemy or the harm-doer is not an obstacle. The essence of



this section is that the enemy or the harm-doer who obstructs us from accumulating merit is in fact not an obstruction at all. The teachings state that we should put aside viewing the enemy or harm-doer as an obstruction for us to accumulate merit. In fact, we should look upon him with respect. Here the teachings state that the enemy or the harm-doer is in fact special objects who are indeed very rare.

*C. Reflecting on it as an object one ought to have respect for*

*1. As it is something that acts to develop qualities, one should respect it*

*A. Its benefits for oneself are great*

*1. The rarity of the special field*

Verse 6.106

There are indeed beggars in this world,  
But rare are those who inflict harm;  
If I have not harmed others  
Few beings will cause me harm.

What do you think? Are there more beggars or more enemies?

*Khen Rinpoche: If somebody were to ask you, do you meet more beggars or do you have more enemies, what is your answer?*

*Student: More beggars.*

*Khen Rinpoche: Why?*

*Student: I seldom harm people.*

*Khen Rinpoche: Good.*

For those who are real practitioners of bodhicitta, I guess they find it rare to encounter enemies. In this context here, we are talking about the real bodhisattvas. Because the real bodhisattvas don't harm others, generally speaking, they are unlikely to have enemies or people who give them trouble. As such, the enemy becomes a very rare object for the bodhisattvas. They find it rare to have objects that enable them to further enhance their practice of patience. Generally speaking, anything that is hard to come by in this world is usually considered more precious. Since the enemies are rare, then it is appropriate to like them.

*2. It is reasonable to take joy in that*

Verse 6.107

Therefore, just like a treasure appearing in my house  
Idly without me accomplishing it,  
I should be happy at the enemy  
For he assists me in my deeds of enlightenment.

Imagine a situation whereby a rare treasure that one has been looking for all along suddenly appears on its own accord without any effort on one's part. One would only feel happy in these circumstances. In general, the bodhisattvas have great difficulty finding people to practise patience with. For these bodhisattvas, because the enemy

appears to them, they are able to really practise the perfection of patience and are then able to bring their practice of the perfection of patience to completion. For these bodhisattvas then, the enemy is really like a rare treasure.

Next it is appropriate to have the thought of benefiting the enemy.

3. *It is reasonable to adopt the attitude that it is beneficial*

Verse 6.108

Because I am able to practice this,  
He is worthy of being the very first to be given  
The fruit of my patience,  
For in this way he is the cause of it.

I guess this verse is like a dedication of the merit. The existence of the enemy is an indispensable condition for the practice of patience. If one practices patience, then one is able to accumulate the merit of having practised patience. Then one will experience the benefits of practising patience. Due to the practice of patience, one dedicates the fruit of that practice of patience—whatever one achieves including enlightenment—to the enemy or harm-doer who is the condition that enables one to practise patience in the first place.

There is a story of two persons by the names of Lama Serkengpa and Lama Ngai Thubten. Lama Ngai Thubten was the guru of Lama Serkengpa. Lama Ngai Thubten, who was a bandit chief, took all the material possessions belonging to Lama Serkengpa. As a result, Lama Serkengpa lost all his power, prestige and wealth.

I guess prior to being deprived and robbed of all his possessions, Lama Serkengpa was someone who was very powerful with great prestige and high position in society. Because he was deprived of all his power, wealth and status in society, he decided to go into isolation and live a life of austerity. It was because of going into isolation retreat that he was able to really engage in pure Dharma practice. As a result, he was able to develop experiences of the path. Thus Lama Serkengpa was very appreciative of Lama Ngai Thubten, regarding him to be very kind.

The point is that our usual view of the enemy or the harm-doer as bad and unhelpful is not really correct if we think about it. Rather than viewing the enemy or the harm-doer as an obstruction to our practice of virtue, in actual fact if we know how to think, that person is actually very helpful to us and is an essential condition for our practice of virtue. In particular, if we want to practise patience, then the enemy or the harm-doer is really very helpful. As such, for people who have accomplished the practice of patience, they dedicate all the benefit that they received and the merit that they have gained to that enemy.

Of course we will still object to this by saying, “Why should I respect the enemy? He is not deserving of my respect. He is not worthy of me paying homage and making offerings to him just because he is the condition for me to practise patience. This is because he doesn’t have the intention to benefit me and to help me practise patience. He has no motivation whatsoever to benefit me in any way. So why should I venerate and respect him?”

The response to that is stated in Verse 6.109.

*B. It is not reliant upon having reflected upon the qualities*

1. *It does not cease to be an object worthy of offerings just because one does not have the attitude that it benefits oneself*

Verse 6.109

OBJECTION: Why should this enemy be venerated,  
Since he has no intention for me to practice patience?

RESPONSE: Then why venerate the sacred Dharma  
That is a fit cause for practice?

We usually think, “Yes, I need the enemy to practise patience but nevertheless I don’t have to venerate him. I don’t have to respect him. I don’t have to see him in that way. I don’t have to make offerings to him because from his side, he doesn’t have any intention to help me practise patience nor does he have any intention to benefit me. Since he has no intention to benefit me, there is no reason for me to venerate him and make offerings to him.” This is what we think.

If that is what we think, then if we were asked, “Should you respect the Dharma? Should you make offerings to the Dharma?” We would probably say yes.

But does the Dharma have any intention to benefit us? The Dharma Jewel, true paths and true cessations, benefit us when we achieve them. But from the side of true paths and true cessations, they do not have the motivation to benefit or to help us. If that is the case, then why do we venerate the Dharma? So that is the argument.

Of course we want to have the last say. We agree but we respond in this way, “Fine, but there is still a big difference. Yes, the Dharma may not have the intention to benefit me but at least, it doesn’t have the intention to harm me. The enemy not only does not have any intention to benefit me, he has every intention of harming me.” Our objection is stated in Verse 6.110.

2. *It does not cease to be an object worthy of offerings just because one has the attitude that it is harmful to oneself*

Verse 6.110

OBJECTION: Since he intends to cause me harm,  
He is not to be venerated.

RESPONSE: If, like a doctor, someone strives to benefit me  
Then how can I practice patience?

The enemy is an object suitable to be venerated because he is an object of observation for the cultivation of patience.

3. *Thus, as it acts as a focal condition for patience, it is worthy as an object of offerings*

Verse 6.111

Thus since patience is produced  
In dependence upon a very hateful mind,

He is a cause of patience,  
Whereby he is worthy of veneration just like the sacred Dharma.

We cannot practise patience and bring that practice to completion in dependence on somebody who has loving concern for us. One can only practise patience and bring the practice to completion in dependence upon someone who is harming us, i.e., someone who has harmful intentions towards us, who is angry at us. Although the enemy does not have any intention to benefit us, nevertheless, without the enemy as the cause and condition, there is no way we can practise patience and bring that practice to completion. As such, the enemy is worthy of veneration.

*Khen Rinpoche: This patience chapter never seem to finish. I commit to finishing the patience chapter by Thursday. I have to commit to this otherwise I will never finish this chapter. Chapter seven on joyous perseverance, maybe I will go as fast as possible, just reading the verses.*

We like to be in various desirable situations and we like to have material gain, fame, reputation and praise. In short, we are really attached to these eight worldly dharmas. When we get what we don't want and we don't get what we want, then we get mighty upset. For most of us, our minds are usually disturbed on a daily basis because of our attachment to the things that we want. We are also attached to disliking the things that we don't want. Because of that, every day there is a lot of mental disturbance and upheaval that cause us to be very unhappy and which in turn lead to anger and so forth.

The many verses in this chapter tell us the reasons why it is actually inappropriate and incorrect to be upset over such things. What we need to do is to look through these verses slowly, think about them on our own and to reflect on them in order to reap the benefit.

As I said earlier, the material we have covered so far is intellectually not challenging at all. It is so straightforward. There is nothing that we don't understand. There aren't any new words or terms that we are not familiar with. The verses are easy to understand.

The only difficult thing is putting them into practice. We only have to practise them. We just have to look at them on a regular basis, going through the verses slowly, thinking about them and reflecting on them. We need to get familiar with the ideas that are mentioned in this text and to familiarise ourselves with these logical and correct ways of thinking.

There may be some people who are looking for intellectual challenge. If this is so, they have got it wrong. Some people think, "This is an easy text. There is nothing intellectually challenging about it." Because it is easy, as such, their interest in the text and their determination to study it are lessened. That is incorrect.

The challenge here is not in understanding the meaning of the text. The point here is not about studying it. The point here is about practising it. The challenge here is to internalise what we have learnt through reflection. That is the challenge.

What is this particular section that we have just covered driving at? It is trying to make one consistent point—that the enemy or the harm-doer is not an obstruction for us. In fact, he is our benefactor, somebody who is very kind and very useful for us. That is the thesis that we need to prove to our own mind. It is only through constant reflection and thinking over time that we can move our mind slowly in that direction, to change our own view of those people in our lives who we dislike or who give us problems. That is what we need to do for ourselves.

*Khen Rinpoche: Are you now challenged by that?*

So many reasons are put forth to challenge our old and familiar idea of seeing the enemy as completely bad, as an obstruction to us in every way. We just have to follow the reasoning given and familiarise ourselves with them so as to move our mind away from the old way of looking at the enemy. Instead we should move towards seeing that person as somebody who is very kind, beneficial, helpful and useful to us.

The great bodhisattva, Shantideva, has put up many reasons to prove his point that the enemy is not an obstruction but rather, the enemy is very kind. We have to look at the arguments that he has put forth. If you disagree and object to any of his arguments, you can always bring it up.

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