

**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 41**5 August 2014**

Summary of Chapter Six. Homework assignment.

CHAPTER SEVEN: VERSES 7.1 – 7.10

- Imploring one to exert joyous effort (V. 7.1)
- Identifying joyous effort (V.7.2a)
- Identifying the discordant classes of joyous effort (V. 7.2 b, c, d)
- Abandoning the laziness that relishes the taste of idleness (V. 7.3 – V.7.10)

We have finished with the chapter on patience. In essence, that chapter talks about the three types of patience:

1. The patience of accepting suffering
2. The patience that is intent on Dharma
3. The patience that pays no heed to those who cause harm

These are the three types of patience to meditate on. You have to be familiar with the terminology and the divisions and be able to express them properly.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

As a kind of revision exercise, with respect to the patience that pays no heed to those who cause harm (or disregarding the harm done to oneself), there are many verses that talk about this particular type of patience. Read through all those verses and then think about them. From those verses, choose two verses that make sense to you, that affect you, touch you or that you find really beneficial. Then in writing, explain briefly your reasons for choosing these two verses and how they are helpful to you.

Khen Rinpoche: This is homework. You must write it down. Everyone who signed up to study in the BP class must do this and pass it back to me. If you have signed up and you want to study, then you must write this down and pass it up.

Likewise do the same for the patience that accepts suffering. There are also many verses that talk about that particular form of patience. Pick two verses that you really find beneficial for your mind and also briefly state the reasons of how they are beneficial for you.

As for the patience that is intent on Dharma, you choose one of the many verses that talk about this particular form of patience. Likewise explain why you chose that verse.

The way to do this homework is to read through the chapter. Choosing the verses and justifying your choice have to be the result of you having thought about them. Therefore you should think about them before you choose and then write about them. Please submit your homework in the first week of September.

Khen Rinpoche: Don't just pick out the verses. This is not what I'm looking for. This is a type of homework so it is important that you do it.

SUMMARY

Cultivating the patience that pays no heed to those who cause harm (V. 6.35 – V. 51)

During the discussion on the patience that pays no heed to those who cause harm, there was the discussion on our usual reaction to the enemy, those we consider to be the enemy and those we consider to be harm-doers. The usual perspective is to look at them as someone who is totally bad and undesirable. The mind that has such a perspective is a mind that is very disturbed, that is not calm and is very unhappy.

In the context of training our mind in practising the Dharma, having such a disturbed mind is said to be a big obstacle. It is said that with this kind of anger, our roots of virtue are destroyed. So it is very harmful for us.

It has been said in the teachings that the sentient beings whom we consider to be the enemy or harm-doer have been our mothers numberless times. With their kindness, they have helped to sustain us in the past for a very long time. If this thought is present and we bring that to mind, then there is no room to be upset with that person.

Cultivating the patience that accepts suffering (V. 6.12 – V. 6.21)

In our discussion on the patience that accepts suffering, in the context of accomplishing virtue, doing something beneficial or during the course of our practice, there will be times when we experience all kinds of difficulties, physical hardships and so forth. To some people, this could be an obstacle in that they get discouraged and give up.

The thing to remember then is that as soon as we take on a body, as soon as this body comes into being, the causes and conditions for physical pain, tiredness and suffering come into being too.

That is the very nature of our existence, the very nature of the body. There is nothing much we can do about it. Even if we were to pray, "May this not happen," our prayers cannot help. That being the case, rather than focussing on the pain, we should change the way we look at suffering by looking at its benefits and advantages.

By thinking more expansively, use the situation of the pain and suffering and see how that situation is actually helpful to achieving our long-term goals and everlasting happiness. So it is important to view suffering in a positive way especially when suffering arises in the course of the practice of accomplishing virtue. If not, then there is a possibility or tendency for some people to get disheartened, discouraged and lose hope. Of course, that will become an impediment and an obstacle to the

continuation of one's practice.

Lacking faith in the Dharma or lacking stability in one's faith in the Dharma is an obstacle to one's Dharma practice. In fact, that is the biggest obstacle—not having the stable conviction in the Dharma is the biggest obstacle to practice.

In particular, without the faith of conviction in the Three Jewels and karma and its effects, it is quite difficult to do any real practice. Therefore it is absolutely important to continuously think about the presentation of dependent arising in terms of causality with respect to karma and its effects over and over again until one gains some conviction and ascertainment.

In particular, one has to think about subtle dependent arising, i.e., everything is dependently designated. One has to think about that deeply until one gains conviction in this. Without understanding this, there is no way to really cut the root of one's frustrations, problems and suffering. When one gets some understanding and develops a stable faith and conviction in subtle dependent arising, then I would think that the patience that is intent on Dharma (or certitude about the teachings) will arise.

We took quite a bit of time to finish Chapter Six. It is an important chapter. If you were to distil the essence of Chapter Six, it is basically these three types of patience. The teachings tell us that we should take the essence of this human life of freedoms and endowments by cultivating and meditating on these three types of patience.

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## **CHAPTER SEVEN: TEACHING JOYOUS EFFORT**

Chapter Seven is the chapter on joyous effort (or joyous perseverance).

- In Chapter One, we looked at the benefits of the mind of enlightenment.
- Chapter Two is the chapter on confessing negativities.
- Chapter Three is the practice of the preliminary practices of accumulating merit and purifying negativities. One then adopts bodhicitta through a ritual. Here one is striving to generate the mind of enlightenment that was not generated earlier.
- Then the next three chapters (Chapters Four to Six) are the chapters on teaching conscientiousness, guarding introspection (or vigilance) and relying on patience.

After generating the bodhicitta that was not generated earlier, one needs to prevent one's bodhicitta (or mind of enlightenment) that was generated earlier from degenerating. Hence one has to rely on conscientiousness, the cultivation of introspection and the meditation on patience.

But it is insufficient to prevent the mind of enlightenment that was generated from degenerating. It is also important to enhance that mind of enlightenment that was generated. Hence you have the chapters on developing joyous effort, concentration (or meditative stabilisation) and the perfection of wisdom.

First, we have the verse that is an exhortation to undertake joyous effort.

Verse 7.1

With patience I should undertake joyous perseverance;  
Enlightenment will dwell in those who strive.  
Just as there is no movement without wind,  
So merit does not occur without joyous perseverance.

During our discussion on the stages of the path to enlightenment, in the section on the six perfections, it is stated very clearly that the practice of the earlier perfections forms the basis for the practice of the latter ones. The practice of the latter perfections is very much dependent on the practice of the earlier perfections.

We should think about this, “Why is this the case?” and see the rationale being it. For example, in the practice of the perfection of generosity, when we practise generosity, we have to give without grasping. The practice of generosity is an antidote to attachment. In the practice of generosity, in general, we talk about dedicating or giving away our body, roots of virtue and possessions. Such giving means giving without holding back and without grasping. This means that when we are practising giving correctly, the element of grasping or attachment is not there.

Without this adherence, grasping and attachment to the body, roots of virtue and possessions, do you not think that it would then be so much easier to practise ethics (or ethical discipline)? It is easier to guard our ethics if we do not have very strong attachment to such things.

Then if we are able to guard our ethics well, then we will be able to meditate on patience and find it easier to practise patience.

The person who can really strive in generating joyous effort is someone who has a stable and good practice of generosity, ethics and patience. It is on the basis of these three perfections that we will be really able to strive in joyous effort.

Here in Verse 7.1, why do we need to strive to cultivate joyous effort? Because the goal of highest enlightenment can only be achieved if we have joyous effort.

Just as there cannot be any movement without wind, we will not be able to accumulate the collections of merit and wisdom without joyous effort. In order to achieve the highest enlightenment, we need to finish the accumulation of the collections of merit and wisdom. So in order to accumulate the collections of merit and wisdom, we need joyous effort.

Essentially Verse 7.1 is an exhortation imploring us to practise joyous effort. Why? Because without it, the highest enlightenment cannot be achieved. So if you want the highest enlightenment, then you need joyous effort.

What exactly then is joyous effort? What is its definition and what exactly is its entity?

Verse 7.2 a

What is enthusiasm? It is enthusiasm about virtue.

*Khen Rinpoche: That's all. Good night! (Laughter).*

Verse 7.2 b, c, d

Its discordant classes should be explained.

They are laziness, adherence to what is negative,

And despising oneself out of despondency.

What are the discordant classes of joyous effort? Discordant classes mean the opposite so the discordant class of joyous perseverance is laziness. There are three types of laziness:

1. the laziness that relishes the taste of idleness
2. the laziness that clings to unwholesome activities
3. the laziness that is disheartened about virtue

The next verse talks about the first kind of laziness.

Verse 7.3

Because of relishing the pleasurable taste of indolence

And craving based on sleep,

From not being disillusioned with the suffering of cyclic existence,

Laziness grows very strong.

- The laziness that relishes the taste of idleness (also translated as the laziness of procrastination) is the typical laziness of just lazing around. If one has this kind of laziness, one does not start on anything virtuous as one derives pleasure from just lazing around. One is attached to this state of not doing anything and within that state, one does not do any virtue or anything beneficial.

This kind of laziness usually arises due to being distracted by many things. One of the causes of this form of laziness is distraction. Whatever activity or object one is distracted by, one engages in that activity or focuses on that object. One derives pleasure from and enjoys being distracted in this way. One is then attached to that particular pleasure, which causes laziness. That mind will block one from thinking of or engaging in virtue.

- Another cause of this form of laziness is attachment to the pleasure of sleep. If one is very attached to the pleasure of sleep that will lead to this kind of laziness. When attached to the pleasure of sleep, one becomes attached to the bed and pillow. Literally one is glued to the bed and pillow.

*Khen Rinpoche: So you cannot separate yourself from the bed and pillow!*

- Another cause of this first type of laziness is the absence of any disenchantment with samsara. Samsara is in the nature of suffering but one doesn't see that. With respect to samsaric happiness, instead of seeing that it is in the nature of suffering, one sees it as pleasurable real happiness and

develops an emotional attachment to it. That leads to this first kind of laziness that then blocks any virtue from being created.

These are the three causes of the first type of laziness. When this form of laziness arises, we become attached to this kind of laziness. Based on that, we tend to procrastinate doing what is virtuous and with regard to our practice, we will think “I’ll do it later.” This is how procrastination comes in.

This particular form of laziness affects all of us here without exception. All of us have it because we are attracted to indolence and all kinds of distractions. We are also attached to the pleasure of sleep. We are also not sick of samsara. As such, we always procrastinate and postpone whatever virtue or practice that can be done. We are all guilty of this. We are all affected by it. This is an important point.

Then what is the solution? How can we turn things around? How can we reverse this situation? The antidotes or remedies are mentioned in the next few verses.

While it is important to eradicate the causes of laziness in order for joyous effort to arise, that alone is not sufficient as you also need the mind that is intent on the Dharma. You really must want the Dharma and want it so much. If you don’t want the Dharma, if you don’t want the practice, then it is very difficult for joyous effort to arise.

If you want to have joyous effort, you must really want the Dharma very much. In order for you to really want the Dharma very much, first you must be convinced of and know what is in it for you, why you should practise and what the benefits are. You must be convinced of that point.

Let us use the learning of this particular text as an example. If you really want to listen, study and learn this particular text well, then you have to see for yourself what is in it for you and what you stand to gain from doing so. You have to see that for yourself.

As with so many things we do in life, before we set out to seek whatever we are looking for, first we must really want that object. It is only when we see the profit versus the loss, then we understand the benefits of having that thing. Only then will we do something to seek it out.

It is the same with our Dharma practice. Here we are talking about looking at ways to develop that strong desire for the Dharma. It is only when you have a very strong thirst for the Dharma—when you really want it from the depths of your heart—that you will have a strong aspiration for the Dharma. In this context, the aspiration is the thought, “This is something that I must really practise.”

You need to have a strong desire and thirst for the Dharma. That will propel you to generate the joyous effort that in turn will be the cause for you to seek out your goal and work hard for it until you achieve it. That means to bring that task, job or practice to completion based on such a heartfelt attitude.

But it does not mean that you have to bulldoze your way through without stopping until you achieve your goal. That is where the power of relinquishment comes in. You must know how to rest and recuperate in between.

The power of relinquishment here means taking the appropriate rest at the appropriate time. It is a method to further enhance and increase one's joyous effort. If one doesn't know how to apply the power of relinquishment or one applies it incorrectly, then instead of it becoming a cause for the enhancement of one's joyous effort, it becomes the cause for one's joyous effort to degenerate.

Are all of us not like that? Just take reading a book as an example. You pick up a book and in the beginning, you are very excited and very interested in it, thinking, "I'm going to read this book."

Then you get down to reading the book. You open the book and you read. Later you feel tired and decide to take a rest. You close the book. But that is it. The book is closed forever. You never look at it again. This way of learning or this practice will never get you anywhere. In fact, it doesn't contribute at all to joyous effort.

One must have that strong desire or aspiration to carry out the chosen task to completion. If one has that kind of attitude, that attitude will also be there when one is resting. When one is resting, one will never forget what one has set out to do. With that attitude, that rest will never become an obstacle to the enhancement of one's joyous effort.

Another crucial factor for one's practice in the process of applying joyous effort is that one must be far-sighted. Being far-sighted means having a long-term view. You need to have an idea of what you are going to do and how you are going to do it. You should know, "I need to do this first and I must finish it before I go on to the next step because this is the foundation for the next step," and so on and so forth.

You need to have an overview and a long-term view of the tasks at hand so that you will do them one by one. You cannot do everything at the same time. If you do that, you will not succeed.

1. You need to be far-sighted and have a long-term view of your goals.
2. You need to have an expansive perspective in that you must have the desire to acquire every quality and not just think of the small things. You must have the courage and the mental space that aspires to achieving all the good qualities.
3. You need to keep a steady pace in that you should practise in a sustained and composed way. This means not doing things in a messy manner by wanting to do everything at the same time or doing a little bit here, a little bit there, i.e., not in a steady way. While keeping a steady pace, deep down the mind is engaging in the practices in a very calm and composed manner by applying a continuous flow of joyous effort.

Essentially the remedy to the first type of laziness that is presented in this text here is the meditation on death and impermanence. The next few verses talk about that. I would think that you can condense all of these verses into the three roots that

constitute the meditation on death and impermanence:

1. Death is certain.
2. The time of death is uncertain.
3. At the time of death, nothing can benefit us except the Dharma.

Verse 7.4

Enmeshed in the snare of disturbing conceptions,  
You have entered the snare of birth.  
Why are you still not aware  
That you have gone into the mouth of the Lord of Death?

This verse is talking about the certainty of us dying.

Verse 7.5

Do you not see  
That he is systematically slaughtering your species?  
Any craving based on sleep  
Is like a buffalo with a butcher.

This verse is also a reflection on the certainty of us having to die.

Verse 7.6

While the Lord of Death is looking,  
Having blocked off every route,  
How can you enjoy eating?  
And thus how can you enjoy sleep?

I don't think you need an explanation of this verse. It is quite pretty straightforward.

If there is anything that you don't understand, here it is using some examples to illustrate how we are all certain to die. We should apply these examples to our own lives meaning that we ourselves are going to die. By reflecting on the certainty of our death, we tend to stop the first type of laziness.

But what I think is that for all of us, what makes us procrastinate and postpone our practice is the thought in our minds believing that we are not going to die soon. If we believe deep-down inside us that we still have some time, that we are not going to die soon, then obviously we will postpone our practice. To counteract that, we should reflect on how the time of our death is uncertain.

Verse 7.7 a, b

For as long as death is quickly approaching,  
Then I shall accumulate the collections.

Why do we need to accumulate the collections quickly right now? Because our death is coming soon. We have no idea and there is no certainty as to when that will happen. Therefore we should start accumulating the collections now.

People may understand that they will have to die one day. But due to not really thinking about how their time of death is uncertain, often people think that they will do the practice when they are near the end of their life. They may even think that they will practise at the time of death.

Verse 7.7 c, d  
Even if I were to abandon laziness then,  
At that improper time what will be the use?

Here it is saying that the time of death is the wrong time to give up laziness.

The advice here is that the practice has to be done when one is alive and healthy and when all the conditions are there. Dharma practice cannot be left just to the time of death. If you have not done any practice before and you only want to practise on the day when you will die, at that time, even if you wanted to practise, you will not be able to do so.

Verse 7.8  
When this has not been done, when this is initiated,  
And when this is only half done,  
Suddenly the Lord of Death will come.  
And the thought will occur, “Oh no, I’m doomed!”

I guess this verse is related to how the time of our death is uncertain. This verse is saying that the Lord of Death will strike us at any time. We could die before we actually get down to doing any practice. Or death could happen just after we started the practice or doing some project. Or the Lord of Death could visit us when we are halfway through our practice or our project. It is not as if he will visit us at a fixed time. No! He could strike at any time. Because of that, this is how this verse is related to the uncertainty of the time of our death.

By reflecting on the certainty of our death and how our impending death is going to happen to us soon, by remembering these points, we can then reverse the first type of laziness.

Verse 7.9  
Their faces flowing with tears  
And their eyes red and swollen with sorrow,  
My relatives will finally lose hope  
And I shall behold the faces of the messengers of Yama.

Verse 7.10  
Tormented by the memory of my negativities  
And hearing the sounds of hell,  
In terror I shall clothe my body in excrement.  
What is the use of such a delirious state?

I guess these two verses are talking about the fact that at the time of our death, nothing is of any benefit to us except the Dharma. At the time of our death, our loved

ones are of no use to us. Our body is of no benefit and our possessions are also of no benefit whatsoever. Essentially nothing is of any benefit except the Dharma.

If we are unable to practise while we are still healthy and the mind is still clear, then at the time of death, we will not be able to practise because we will be overwhelmed and tormented by worry, fear and suffering.

The point is that by seeing what is going to happen to us, we should be motivated to abandon such laziness.

Language-wise, this is not a difficult text. The words are easy and there is nothing that we cannot understand. It is quite straightforward. The only thing left for us to do is to sit down, think and reflect on it and apply what is taught to our own mind.

Here we are talking about laziness. Laziness is something that affects everybody without exception. Laziness blocks us from engaging in virtue and what is beneficial. This is an essential point. We have to deal with our laziness. We have to start engaging in virtue. In order to engage in virtue, we have to get down to doing it.

We have to stop our laziness. What other way is there than to think about some of these points? We have to look at whatever we have studied, think about it, reflect on it and then apply it to our lives.

When things are going well in our lives, when we have everything and when we feel good, Dharma practice doesn't get done. In fact this is the biggest obstacle for us. The biggest obstacles are when life is going well and we are feeling good. Is it not the case that you do not get any practice done because you are satisfied with your life, thinking that your life is good? We are attached to that situation and that is really one of the biggest obstacles.

The time for practice is when we are still healthy and in a reasonable physical and mental state. That is the time for practice. If the practice is done when we are in such a good state, then the practice will become good.

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