

**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 42**8 August 2014****CHAPTER SEVEN: VERSES 7. 11 – 7. 10**

1. Abandoning the laziness that relishes the taste of idleness
 - Abandoning laziness by reflecting on the disadvantages of it in future lives (V. 7.11- V. 7.14)
2. Abandoning the laziness that clings to unwholesome activities (V. 7.15)
3. Abandoning the laziness that is disheartened about virtue (V. 7.16 – V. 7.19)

Those of you who are part of the lam-rim analytical meditation programme started off with the topic of correctly relying on the virtuous friend. Now you are meditating on the topics of the human life of freedoms and endowments and death and impermanence.

In the meditation on death and impermanence, the outline starts with reflecting on the disadvantages of not remembering death. I think six disadvantages are mentioned in the lam-rim. We could relate them to whatever we have covered so far in Chapter Seven of this text as a few of the verses discuss the drawbacks of not remembering death.

It was mentioned in the teachings that laziness is one of the things that prevents us from practising the Dharma and from accomplishing virtue. We know we have to engage in virtue but we don't get down to doing it. Laziness plays a part in stopping us from engaging in virtue.

In the last lesson, we talked about the laziness that is an attachment to idleness. We derive pleasure from hanging around, doing nothing, sleeping and so forth. We feel that such activities bring us joy. There is a mind that is attached to the joy that comes from these activities.

It is taught that one of the best remedies or antidotes to reverse this kind of laziness is the meditation on death and impermanence.

In the discussion on the drawbacks or the faults of not remembering our own impending death and our own impermanence, one of the faults is that we don't remember the Dharma. That is the first disadvantage that is mentioned in the lam-rim literature.

Even if we remember the Dharma, we don't practise it. That is also attributed to not

remembering death and impermanence.

And even if we remember the Dharma, even if we practise the Dharma, the practice doesn't become pure. That is another fault of not remembering our own death and our own impermanence.

Even when we do remember the Dharma, practise it and somehow that practice is pure practice, we can't sustain it. We are not able to sustain the practice continuously. That again is due to not remembering and not meditating on death and impermanence.

As such, we live our lives like that—not remembering the Dharma or remembering it but not practising it or practising it but the practice does not become pure. Even if the practice is pure, it is not complete and we can't sustain it. The teachings said that this is how our lives are wasted. At the end of such a wasted life, there is only regret. We will have to die with sorrow and regret. This is said to be another fault or drawback of not remembering our own death and impermanence.

There is nothing here that we don't know already. What I have just said, we know all that. So it is not about listening. That doesn't do the job. From our own side, what we need to do is to think about it. Not just think about it but to think about it continuously all the time.

This is an extremely important point. This is the story of our lives—all of us here without exception, you, me and everybody else out there. The moment we don't think of our own death and impermanence, then that is how our whole life is wasted.

Guntang Rinpoche said in his poem:

Perhaps twenty years of remembering that
One should do a practice,
Perhaps twenty years of being forever
About to do a practice,
Perhaps another ten years of saying,
'I never did a practice' —
That's the story of an empty and wasted human life.¹

Such advice is really very helpful and very good.

Similarly the first few verses of Chapter Seven of this text are also very effective and essential if we think about them. We talked about reflecting on death and impermanence. That reflection pertains to our own impending death. It is essential for us to think of our own impending death and our own impermanence. Without reflecting on our own death, without meditating on our own impermanence, there is no space for us to do any practice. The Dharma practice that is done doesn't become practice at all.

¹ Pabongka Rinpoche, *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, (Boston: Wisdom Publications 1993), page 348.

We are like fish caught in the net thrown by the fishermen at sea (Verse 7.4). If you are a fish, once you get stuck in the net cast by the fisherman, you are definitely going to die. There is no way for you to escape. It is a matter of time that you will definitely die.

We are like the fish. The fisherman is analogous of our afflictions; primarily our anger and attachment. Propelled by our anger and attachment, we are cast into the net of of samsaric suffering. The net is analogous of samsara. As long as we are born into samsara, death is definite. It will definitely happen to us. We can use this particular analogy to reflect on our own situation. It can be helpful.

Another approach that can be useful is to think about our fellow human beings. If we look at our lives and our own experience, how many people—be they loved ones, friends or people we meet—who we know in our lives have already passed away? Perhaps we could count mentally the people in our lives that have already passed away. In that way perhaps we will notice that when it comes to dying, there is no certainty that people who are older will necessarily die first. People die at different ages. Some die when they are young. Some die when they are old. Perhaps it may be useful to think about that.

In our lives, we have already witnessed relatives, loved ones, friends and people we know who have already died. We also see people dying. Yet we don't seem to be moved by it. While we have seen and are still seeing people around us slowly dying, somehow we are not moved enough to practise the Dharma.

The teachings (Verse 7.5) gave the example of us being likened to cattle, cows, buffaloes, goats and sheep. Flocks of these animals are being led to the slaughter house. Then the butcher kills the animals one by one. While the butcher is killing the animals in front of them, the other animals are so ignorant and not cognizant of their own fate. They are just happily grazing, eating, lying around and sleeping. We are just like those animals. While it is definite that we are going to die, we just hang around and allow ourselves to be distracted by all kinds of activities that keep us from doing our practice.

We are also like someone who is travelling along a particular road (Verse 7.6). We know we have no choice but to travel along that road because all other roads are completely blocked. We also know that there is an assassin who is out there to get us somewhere along that road. Yet we have no choice but to travel on that road as it is the only road that is opened. As a traveller on that road, knowing that there is an assassin who is going to kill us, there is no room to feel at ease. Instead we will feel worried all the time.

Likewise the teachings used this example to say, “How could it be possible for us to feel relaxed, laze around and be attached to all kinds of things that are not worthwhile. We are attached to various things even as we know that the Lord of Death is waiting for us and can strike at any time.

In this example, a person is travelling on that road because all other roads are blocked. This is an analogy of the fact that death is certain and there is no way to stop

death. We have no choice but to travel on the road to death. Somewhere along that road, the Lord of Death is ready and waiting to pounce on us. We are just like that person in that we are moving towards the Lord of Death without any choice whatsoever.

The teachings say that if we are cognizant of this fact—if we really think about our own impending death—then there is no way we will live our lives the way we do, i.e., lazing around and being happy to just pass the day. When the day is over and night comes, we sleep. Then we just carry on doing what we are doing the next day. The teachings say that anyone who recognises the fact of his impending death will never ever live life like that.

These are the different examples that we could reflect on in order to have the feel of the certainty of our own death. Not only are we definitely going to die, our death will happen to us very soon.

If you remember, the teachings do mention that the Lord of Death doesn't wait for you to retire from your job before taking you away (Verse 7.8). He doesn't wait for you to finish whatever plans you may have or the things you want to do. He can just come and claim you any time.

We face so many conditions—conditions that are unfavourable for sustaining life and conditions that are favourable for dying quickly—all kinds of difficulties in life, different kinds of diseases and sicknesses and so forth.

In our previous lesson, we also saw how thinking of wanting to practise at the time of death without actually having done so while we were alive and well is not the correct thing to do. It is wrong to do that because by then it will be too late.

If one doesn't practise when one is well, then on the day of one's death, one may think, "I must practise Dharma. I must do something." Shantideva says that is wrong and incorrect. The time to think of practising the Dharma is not on the day of death. The time to think about practice is right now!

If one didn't practise Dharma when one is alive and if one thinks that one could practise the Dharma at the time of death, then one has to understand that it is probably very difficult to do so at that time. As it says in verse 7.10, at the time of death, if you are someone who didn't do any practice or didn't do much practice before the day of your death, then on that day, you may suddenly remember all the things that you feel you shouldn't have done in your life. You may remember all the negativities that you have created. Your mind will be quite upset and disturbed because there is so much regret. I think it is really quite difficult to practise any Dharma at that time.

If you are slated to go to the lower realms, then at the time of death, when the karma ripens, you will have karmic appearances such as hearing wailing or unpleasant sounds that are indicative of your impending rebirth in the lower realms. When you hear these sounds, it can be very frightening. The mind will be so worried and you will be so frightened. It becomes almost impossible for you to practice any Dharma or

to think of virtue then.

Those who didn't get to do the practice when they were alive and didn't get to do anything really meaningful and beneficial, then at the time of death, many a times such people become seriously disturbed. When you look at their physical demeanour and what they are saying, you can see what they are thinking inside. They come across as if they are crazy people freaking out. In such a state of mind, what practice can they do and what virtue can they remember? This is what is being described in the teachings.

There are people who don't practise and at the time of death, they freak out. Often they cannot even recognise the people around them. If they cannot even recognise the people around them, how can they remember the Dharma?

Therefore while we are still alive, while we still have some control and freedom to practise and while we still have the conditions to do so, then we have to start practising now. We should think of our own impending death to persuade ourselves to practise.

In the previous class, we didn't have much time to talk about each of these verses individually (i.e., Verses 7.4 – 7.10). Essentially what I have just said is their meaning.

~~~~~

*Question:* In the chapter on patience, verse 6.95 says:

Whether this praise is directed at myself or someone else  
How shall I be benefited by other's joy?  
Since that joy is theirs alone  
I shall not obtain even a part of it.

Here it is questioning whether we are attached to the words or the sounds of the praise or the happiness in the mind of the person praising us.

If the person is happy to praise us, it is said that there is no way that we can partake of his happiness. I think that to rejoice in the person who praises others, which is a virtuous thing to do, one gains virtue from such rejoicing. This is supported by Verses 6.76 and 6.77:

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.

I feel that Verses 6.95 and V6.76 and V6.77 are contradictory and I would like to clarify this point.

*Khen Rinpoche: I have no idea. You say these two are contradictory.*

*Student 1: Verse 6.95 is saying that praise is not good whereas Verses 6.67 and 6.77 are saying that you should rejoice when someone praises someone else. If I put them together, they seem to be contradictory.*

*Khen Rinpoche: Somebody answer her question. A short answer as she says they are contradictory.*

*Student 2: For Verses 6.76 and 6.77, the outline says, "It is inappropriate to be jealous when your enemies are praised." So it is saying that when somebody praises your enemy, you should not be jealous whereas for Verse 6.95, it is talking about yourself not being attached to the mind of somebody who is happy praising you. Do you see the difference?*

*Student 1: I feel that this applies very much to oneself. In the situation where someone that you don't like is being praised, you should actually rejoice at those praises. The mind that you should change is your own mind. But when the praises are directed at yourself, then you should think otherwise. So you have to be flexible, in that sense, ...*

*Khen Rinpoche: The section on Verses 6.76 and 6.77 is talking about how we should react when we hear our enemy or the people whom we don't like being praised by others. The usual reaction is that we don't like it when our enemies are praised so we get upset. Therefore we need to be patient.*

What is an upset mind? An upset mind is the mind that is disturbed. How do you counteract that? You counteract it by checking whether that praise accords with facts and reality or not. If the enemy deserves the praise for something that accords with reality, something that is good and is really happening, the teaching tells us that we should acknowledge that fact. By acknowledging that the praise is deserved and accords with reality then we don't become disturbed or we are less disturbed. The point is that it is all about dealing with our own mind. It is our practice.

Verse 6.95 on the other hand relates to oneself being the object of praise. The problem is that when we are praised, our usual reaction is that we get very excited. That is what our usual reaction is. We become very arrogant and proud because of the praise and we become attached to it. That is the problem that needs to be addressed, that needs to be stopped because it is an obstacle for us.

The point here then is not to get attached to the praise. The verse relates to dealing with whatever attachment that may arise when we ourselves are praised. Getting attached to the praise that we may receive from people is something that needs to be dealt with. So in that section, there is a list of suggested antidotes or remedies.

The point is to think that even if we do receive some praise, that praise doesn't make us live longer, become physically stronger, make our problems such as sicknesses go away and so forth. These are just the different ways to counteract whatever attachment that may arise when we are praised.

*Khen Rinpoche: I thought we had completed the chapter on patience. (Laughter).*

~~~~~

ABANDONING THE LAZINESS THAT RELISHES THE TASTE OF IDLENESS (cont'd)

The particular section that we are dealing with now talks about the laziness that relishes the taste of idleness, i.e., idle chatter, lazing about sleeping. This kind of laziness harms us and causes us problems in this life and would also bring about problems in our future lives.

So next is about abandoning this laziness by thinking about the suffering that we have to experience in the next life.

Verse 7.11

If even in this life you shall be gripped with fear
Like that of a live fish being rolled,
What need even to mention the unbearable sufferings of hell
[Due to] the negativities you have committed?

A fish jumps out of the water for whatever reason. From the shore you can see that the fish is flipping about and struggling. You can see that the fish is really suffering.

Likewise because of laziness and not having engaged in virtue, because of not practising when we were alive, because of the immeasurable amount of negativities that we have accumulated, needless to say we will have to experience far more unbearable suffering such as being burnt in the hell realms. How is it possible for us to endure that kind of pain?

Furthermore on the day of our death, we will find the whole process of dying very difficult and unbearable, just like a fish struggling when it is out of water.

Verse 7.12

Why do you remain at ease like this
Having committed the actions of hell
Where your delicate flesh will burn
When touched by streams?

It is said that the hell fires are many times hotter than the hottest fire we humans know of. On top of that, it is said that the bodies of those who are born in hell, especially their skin, are very delicate. Their delicate skin is like that of a newborn child. When we have such delicate skin, coupled with the fire of hell, which is so many times hotter than the fire of this human world, how is it possible for us to endure it?

The point here is that we should practise Dharma and not be lazy. We should see all these verses so far as somebody imploring us to practise the Dharma. It is a contradiction to want happiness on the one hand and on the other, not wanting to engage in the causes of happiness, i.e., virtue. So there is a big contradiction there.

Verse 7.13

Much harm befalls those who want results without striving,
As well as those sensitive ones.
While clasped by death, I shall wail like the gods,
“Oh no, I shall be destroyed by suffering!”

Those who are cognizant of their own impermanence and impending death, who recognise that if they don't practise the Dharma and engage in virtue, they would have a horrible and fearful death and experience unbearable suffering in future lives—it is said that those who are cognizant of all these facts are the ones who really exert joyous effort day and night, even giving up sleep and only engaging in virtue.

The teachings say that we are not really interested in accomplishing virtue such as going into isolation or doing retreat, be it for years or months. We don't put in that kind of effort and we don't have that kind of determination. Whether it is studying or learning the Buddhadharma, we are also pretty much like that. We don't really want to do it with a heartfelt wish, so we don't really strive and put in the effort. That's us. Forget about practising day and night, we don't even put in the effort to strive for a month. How can we say we practise day and night? Even a month is difficult for us.

Yet at the same time, we have big goals and we aim very high. For example, we want to be an expert in this or that but the effort we put in and the determination we generate are not commensurate with it. We want to experience the path. We want realizations. We want this, that and the other but we don't want to work for them and our efforts are not commensurate with our goals.

We may even think of wanting to get a good rebirth. Some people think, “I want to go to the pure land,” but at the same time, they do not do anything to achieve that. We wish to achieve all kinds of results, yet we do not do anything to achieve them or put in the effort that is commensurate with our goals. So there is a contradiction there.

Khen Rinpoche: It is a contradiction!

Next the text says that if we cannot tolerate or endure small inconveniences and small hardships, then life would be just one big problem. As we saw earlier, anybody who is born in cyclic existence is destined to die. Death is an inevitable part of samsaric life.

Despite that being the case, you can see that there are many people who behave as if they are gods of the desire realm who have very long lives and many enjoyments. They just laze around enjoying themselves. There are many people in samsara who are not gods of the desire realm behaving as if they are desire realm's gods. They are content and happy just to pass each day and night enjoying and living life as if they are not going to die.

The teaching says that people who have this kind of mindset and behave in such a way are objects of compassion.

Verse 7.14
 Relying upon the human boat,
 Free yourself from the great river of suffering!
 As it is hard to find this boat later,
 Do not sleep at this time, fool!

The verse is saying that having obtained this human life now, we should use it to free ourselves from the three realms of samsara. This is essentially the meditation on how this human life of freedoms and endowments that we have obtained now is greatly meaningful and is difficult to find again. By reflecting on these two points, we encourage and persuade our mind to practise the Dharma.

With that we finish with the antidotes or remedies to the first type of laziness.

Essentially the first type of laziness is actually the laziness of procrastination, but that is not how it is referred to in Gyaltsab Je's commentary. Its meaning is that due to one's attachment to activities such as idle chatter, sleep or simply lazing around doing nothing, one procrastinates and do not practise the Dharma.

ABANDONING THE LAZINESS THAT CLINGS TO UNWHOLESOME ACTIVITIES

The second type of laziness described in Verse 7.15 is the laziness that clings to unwholesome activities.

Verse 7.15
 Having rejected the supreme joy of the sacred Dharma
 That is an infinite cause of joy,
 Why do you enjoy being distracted by the causes for suffering,
 Frivolous amusements and the like?

Verse 7.15 is saying that the sublime Dharma is the source of endless and the highest joy. Having found the Dharma now, why are we wasting our time by not practising it?

- The verse is telling us that it is wrong to not practise the Dharma but just live a busy life full of hustle and bustle. Being attached to such a life will only lead to all kinds of problems in this and our future lives.
- The teachings say that most people in this world live their lives revolving around the enemy and the loved one. When an enemy arises, they will always think of ways to defeat, get around or overcome the enemy. At the same time, they will think of how to support and take care of their loved ones. Arising from these two ways of relating with people come anger and attachment. This is how people live their lives revolving around hatred and attachment.
- Many people also live their whole lives revolving around making money day and night and accumulating wealth. This is how they are distracted in their entire life.
- Also most of us live our lives revolving around idle chatter that invariably links to either hatred or attachment.

- Also many people have very strong concepts of the past and future, i.e., whatever is happening in the present situation, they will always relate it to what had happened in the past and then project what will happen in the future. As a result, there is a lot of mental agitation or excitement, a lot of discursive thoughts. That is another way in which people fritter away and waste their lives.

The teachings describe how most people live and waste their lives due to attachment to all these various things. As such, there is a need to deal with our attachment to them.

ABANDONING THE LAZINESS THAT IS DISHEARTENED ABOUT VIRTUE

Next is abandoning the laziness that is disheartened about virtue (or the laziness of discouragement).

Verse 7.16

Without despondency, I should gather the masses of army
And diligently take control of myself.
Through equalizing self with others and
Exchanging self for others,

Verse 7.17

I should not be despondent by thinking,
“How can I ever attain enlightenment?”
Thus the tathagatas who speak what is true
Have uttered this truth:

Verse 7.18

“If they develop the strength of exertion,
Even those who are flies, mosquitoes, bees, and likewise worms
Will win the unsurpassable enlightenment
Which is hard to attain.”

Verse 7.19

Since I have been born human by race
And recognize what is beneficial and what is harmful,
If I do not forsake the deeds of enlightenment,
Why will I not attain enlightenment?

You know what these verses are saying—if you work for it, you will be enlightened.

According to Gyaltzab Je’s commentary, Verse 7.16 is related to the laziness of discouragement whereas there are other commentaries that classify under the previous type of laziness, the laziness that clings to unwholesome activities.

Khen Rinpoche: I better stop here now. You all look lazy. I myself also feel lazy so ...

Interpreted by Ven. Tenzin Gyurme; transcribed by Phuah Soon Ek, Vivien Ng & Rachel Tan; edited by Cecilia Tsong.