

**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 43****12 August 2014**

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**CHAPTER SEVEN: VERSES 7. 16 – 7. 30**

- Classifying joyous effort
  - Abandoning the laziness that is disheartened about virtue (V. 7.16 – V. 7. 30)
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Recently we looked at the laziness that clings to unwholesome activities, i.e., the laziness that is attached to doing things that are essentially not beneficial. In that section, we were told that if we live our whole life under the control of our ignorance, anger and attachment distracted by many things, that will be entirely inappropriate. Rather than living our life in such a way, we should practise the Dharma.

The advice to abandon this kind of laziness is essentially the advice to practise the Dharma because the Dharma is the real cause of happiness. The antidote to the laziness that is attached to ignoble activities is to develop an enthusiasm for the Dharma. It is through such enthusiasm that one abandons and counteracts this kind of laziness.

We have to practise the Buddhadharma for it is the cause of everlasting happiness. The subject matter of the entire Buddhadharma is contained in the three scriptural collections. The heart or the meaning of the three scriptural collections is essentially the three higher trainings.

One of the things that stops us from actualising these three higher trainings is distraction. We are distracted solely by the affairs of this life. If we live our life working only for the affairs and the happiness of this life, then we will not be able to actualise the Dharma. The Buddhadharma is the cause of everlasting infinite happiness.

One of the things that stop us from actualising the Dharma is the laziness that clings to unwholesome activities such as the attachment to the happiness of this life. One of the ways to counteract this kind of laziness is to develop real enthusiasm from the heart for the Buddhadharma. It has to be a heartfelt enthusiasm for the Buddhadharma, which comes from seeing that the Buddhadharma is the cause of everlasting infinite happiness.

Having said that, even if one has such enthusiasm for virtue, such enthusiasm for actualising the Dharma, but if one feels discouraged—that is, one has the laziness that is disheartened about virtue or the laziness of discouragement—that will also be

a big obstacle. As such, the following sections of the text deal with this kind of laziness.

Right from the beginning, it is very important to have the confidence that we can definitely engage in the practice and actualise it. So from the outset, it is important to uplift one's mind and mood and to have the confidence that one can do the practice.

### **CLASSIFYING JOYOUS EFFORT**

Of the different ways of classifying joyous effort, one type of joyous effort is known as armour-like joyous effort.

When warriors go to war, they put on armour to protect themselves against all kinds of weapons. Similarly right from the beginning of the practice, one must put on this armour-like joyous effort, an attitude that thinks, "I can definitely do this." It is a heartfelt enthusiasm for Dharma and for virtue. Before you engage in the practice, you need to uplift one's mind and one's mood. The armour-like joyous effort is the preparation for the practice.

Then when one engages in the actual practice, i.e., when one starts on the process of the actual practice, then one needs the joyous effort of application, which is enthusiasm for whatever one is doing while one is doing it. During the time of the actual practice, one takes up the practice sincerely with enthusiasm and one carries out the practice with mindfulness and introspection.

During the actual practice, it is extremely important to do the practice and carry out whatever one has decided on without any sense of discouragement, thinking, "Really, I can't do this." One needs to have that kind of joyous effort of non-inferiority (or joyous effort of non-discouragement).

Then there is also the joyous effort of non-complacency (or the joyous effort of non-contentment). If one has already started on engaging in the practice of the Buddhadharma or in the practice of some virtue, after having accomplished a little bit, one shouldn't have the idea, "I have done enough." Instead, one should think, "I am going to continue to practise and work even harder." One should not feel satisfied or content with whatever one is able to do but rather one should strive to be able to do more.

### **ABANDONING THE LAZINESS THAT IS DISHEARTENED ABOUT VIRTUE**

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,

I guess this verse is talking about the four types of joyous effort:

- Before one starts on any virtuous endeavour or Dharma practice, one must have a sense of enthusiasm, i.e., one's mood and spirits must be high. So one must

uplift the mind. That is armour-like joyous perseverance.

- As one starts to engage in the practice, that engagement must be done happily and with enthusiasm. That is the joyous effort of application.
- In the process of doing the practice, one must do so with enthusiasm and without any discouragement, i.e., applying the joyous effort of non-inferiority, and one does the practice mindfully and with introspection.
- Then comes a point in time when one achieves calm-abiding and the pliancy of the body and mind. That is when one gains control over one's body and mind and one is able to employ them in any virtue one wishes. When one has that kind of ability, from then on, one has mastery over one's body and mind. That comes from achieving calm-abiding. I guess that is when the last type of joyous effort—the joyous effort of non-complacency—can really set in, because from that time onwards, one can really strive in the practice.

I guess this is the meaning of the first two lines of Verse 7.16.

After having gained some mastery over one's body and mind as the result of achieving calm-abiding, one then meditates on bodhicitta through methods such as exchanging self and others. This will be covered in greater detail in the next chapter, Chapter Eight on concentration.

If you think about the presentation of the progression of these different practices, it is said clearly that the cultivation of the actual practice or the real practice of bodhicitta comes after one has gained mastery over one's body and mind, which is the effect of having actualised calm-abiding.

Having said that, perhaps this is why according to some views such as those presented in the textbooks of Sera Je, one needs calm-abiding before one can actualise bodhicitta. If you look at how things are presented in Shantideva's text, perhaps one could argue that there is some truth behind that assertion, i.e., that one could only actualise bodhicitta after one has calm-abiding.

When I looked at Verses 7.17 to 7.19, they are essentially the antidotes or remedies to counteract despondency or discouragement. Their essential meaning is that if one puts in the right effort and cultivates bodhicitta without giving up the bodhisattva trainings, then there is no reason why one cannot achieve enlightenment. The text says that even so-called lowly creatures such as flies, mosquitoes, bees and insects can achieve enlightenment if the conditions are right. What reason then is there for us not to achieve enlightenment?

In Verse 7.18, it says, "Even those who are flies, mosquitoes, bees and likewise worms/ Will win the unsurpassable enlightenment," if they put in the effort!

Primarily the argument that is being made by this line is that all sentient beings including the flies, mosquitoes and so forth can achieve enlightenment because all sentient beings possess the buddha lineage (or buddha nature). This is because the nature of the minds of all sentient beings is clear light and their obscurations and defilements are adventitious in that it is not in the nature of the mind to be defiled or obscured. These defilements and obscurations are there but fortunately, they are temporary and can be removed through the application of antidotes. As such, this is

one of the main reasons that show why all sentient beings indeed have the potential to achieve full enlightenment.

More details on this subject can be found in the next module next year when we look at Chapter One of the *Uttaratantra* or the *Mahayana Sublime Continuum*. By understanding how we ourselves and all sentient beings possess the buddha lineage and the potential to achieve full enlightenment or omniscience if we work at it, we can counteract the laziness of discouragement.

Perhaps it would be beneficial if you could memorise Verse 7.19 so that whenever you feel hopeless or discouraged, then you can think about this verse.

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?

If you think about it, it is really very difficult, in general, to feel discouraged about practising Dharma.

*Khen Rinpoche: True? Not true? Interesting! That means you are working very hard. You are practising Dharma. If that is not true, that means you are working day and night practising Dharma. You get what I am saying?*

I think the practice never discourages us. We think, “I want to achieve enlightenment. That is my motivation.” With that, we recite some mantras, do some daily practice, some studies and then we feel content. “That is great. I am doing great!” So for us, there is no room to be discouraged.

We are not at that level of practice where we ever get discouraged. So discouragement sets in for which kind of practitioner? This person is somebody who understands what enlightenment is, what a buddha really is. In short, this person understands that a buddha is somebody who has eliminated every single fault and have accomplished every single quality.

This person understands that such a state doesn’t happen without any cause or condition. Rather this person fully understands that any individual who wants to actualise this state needs to accomplish limitless varieties of tasks and know the overall picture, understanding what practice has to be done at what stage, without mixing things up or missing out anything. This person understands that that individual must carry out these limitless tasks over a very long period of time, i.e., countless eons. This person has the complete understanding of all these points and has real conviction. But when he is about to start on the practice, he feels, “This is really tough. It is not easy.” That is what you call discouragement.

*Khen Rinpoche: So we don’t have that. We don’t have the last type of laziness.*

*We have only the first two (types of laziness) but it looks like we don’t have the last one.*

*We also don't need the antidote (for it). Since we don't have it (the last type of laziness), so we don't need the antidote.*

There are some practitioners who understand these various things. The cause of them getting discouraged is their understanding that in order to achieve omniscience, they have to engage in the extensive bodhisattva deeds such as the practice of the perfection of generosity. This is said to involve the giving up of one's body or one's life when it is appropriate to do so. Faced by such a prospect, then there are some who will think, "I understand I need to do this but I don't think I can do it. No way!" That is how discouragement sets in.

Such worry or fear is stated in Verse 7. 20.

Verse 7.20

OPINION: Having to give away my legs, arms,  
And so forth frightens me.

RESPONSE: Without analyzing what is heavy and what is light,  
I am reduced to fear through confusion

Verse 7.21

Over countless billions of eons  
I have been cut, stabbed, burned,  
And chopped up many times  
But I will not attain enlightenment. <sup>1</sup>

The essential response to this fear is that this kind of fear is unfounded. In the first place, you are not afraid of what you need to fear but you are frightened by what you do not need to fear.

The answer continues by saying, "It is a different thing if you have to lose your head, your arm and so forth after having generated bodhicitta but what if you hadn't generate bodhicitta? Does that mean that without bodhicitta you don't lose your arms, legs and so forth?"

*Khen Rinpoche: Are you getting the point?*

In the first place, do you understand what the fear is about? What some people are afraid of is engaging in the bodhisattva deeds of giving up their bodies or having to sacrifice parts of their bodies.

If you don't develop bodhicitta, if you don't practise the bodhisattva deeds and at the same time, if you don't end up losing your body, legs, arms and so forth for whatever reason, then maybe there is a reason for you to be afraid of the bodhisattva deeds of having to give up your body.

But obviously that isn't the case because we don't have any bodhicitta. Neither have we engaged in any bodhisattva deeds. But since beginningless lifetimes up to now,

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<sup>1</sup> Ven. Gyurme interpreted the last line of this verse as, "But I still have not attained enlightenment."

how many lifetimes have we been cut, beaten and chopped up for nothing? Although we have been cut, beaten and chopped up many times in the past, none of those experiences benefited us. None of those experiences brought us any closer to enlightenment.

Verse 7.22

Yet this suffering  
For my accomplishing enlightenment will have a limit;  
It is like the suffering of having an incision made  
In order to eliminate the harm of pain destroying it inside.

Even if we have to put up with suffering, engage in austerities and bear hardships in the process of working for omniscience, still whatever hardships that may be involved are still relatively small. Furthermore there is also a limit to them in terms of the time span of three countless great eons. It may sound very long but still we can put a number to it so there is a limit and there will be an end to those hardships. It is like putting up with a small problem in order to overcome a big problem.

Verse 7.23

Even all doctors eliminate illness  
With unpleasant medical treatments,  
So in order to overcome manifold sufferings  
I should put up with little discomfort.

Do you think that the last two lines of Verses 7.22 and 7.23 are an analogy of bearing hardships in order to achieve the greater purpose of full enlightenment? If so, how does the analogy work?

I don't know whether the last two lines of Verses 7.22 and 7.23 are driving at the same thing or not?

Verse 7.24

But the Supreme Physician does not employ  
Such ordinary remedies;  
With a very gentle procedure  
He remedies the boundless great ailments.

Verse 7.24 says that the Buddha shows us the method to cure the big diseases without having to experience the slightest suffering. The point is that when the Buddha shows us the path of freedom to enlightenment, his path is not like ordinary solutions. He is not like the ordinary doctor who prescribes all kinds of unpleasant tasting medicines and make us undergo medical procedures that involve cutting up the body and so forth. But rather, the Buddha helps us to overcome all the problems by showing us a solution that leads from bliss and happiness to bliss and happiness. It is a path that brings only joy.

The Buddha prescribes a happy, blissful and joyful path that leads on to a happy, blissful and joyful result. If you look at the instructions for carrying out the practice of meditation or changing the mind, it always involves the advice to find a suitable

seat. The Buddha doesn't recommend unnecessary discomforts or austerities. We are always advised to sit on a comfortable seat. While seated in a comfortable posture, then we look within as the practice is done inside with the mind. It doesn't involve much externally as it focuses on the inside. What the Buddha has prescribed is the medicine and the method to eradicate karma and afflictions, which is the root and the source of all our problems, including sicknesses and so forth.

The method that the Buddha has prescribed is soft and gentle and does not involve harming or hurting ourselves. Having said that, how do we reconcile this with having to give up your head, your legs and your arms? There seems to be a contradiction here.

*Khen Rinpoche: In order to get enlightened, do you have to give up your limbs and head? If you say no, the next question is how do you then complete the perfection of generosity?*

(Student's response is inaudible).

*Khen Rinpoche: Do you have to give up your body to get enlightened?*

(Student's response is inaudible).

*Khen Rinpoche: That means you haven't read the text. Whether you have to give or don't have to give? If you don't give your limbs and so forth, can you achieve the perfection of generosity?*

The answer is in the next verse.

Verse 7.25

At the beginning, the Guide applies  
The giving of such things as vegetables.  
Later, having become accustomed to that,  
One may progressively give away even one's flesh.

"One may progressively give away even one's flesh." What does this line mean?

Verse 7.25 is the answer to that potential qualm. As stated earlier, people found that they cannot reconcile the fact that, on the one hand, the path that the Buddha has prescribed is said to be a gentle one that does not involve any harm to oneself. On the other hand however, there is an instruction of giving up one's life and one's body to achieve enlightenment.

The answer is in Verse 7.25. At the beginning of one's practice of generosity, one gives away what one finds easy to part with such as a plate of vegetables. There are also instructions to accustom oneself to the practice of generosity, i.e., to generate and increase the thought of giving. In the lam-rim, it is explained how one could practise giving from one's right hand to one's left and from one's left hand to one's right. One could also verbalise one's intent, "I want to give this and I want to give that."

So it is getting oneself used to that attitude of giving. Through familiarising oneself to the idea of giving, then one's willingness and ability to give will gradually increase. It is said that because of thorough habituation or familiarity with the practice of perfection of giving, there will come a point in time when one can give away one's body without any sense of loss.

It is also said that the bodhisattvas reach a point in their practice where they are even able to give away their body without any sense of loss. For such bodhisattvas, giving away their body is like someone giving away a plate of vegetables. They don't feel any sense of loss and there is no attachment holding them back at all.

Verse 7.26

At such a time when I have generated a mind  
That regards my body as being like vegetables,  
Then what hardship will there be  
When it comes to giving away my flesh?

It is said that those who are not expert or skilful in the correct order of the practice of training their mind in the path and do not know how to progress stage by stage, these are the people who experience physical and mental difficulties. It is said that for those who know how to go about doing their practice correctly and in the correct order and so forth, they don't experience any hardship.

Verse 7.27

Due to having abandoned negativities there is no suffering  
And due to skill there is no unhappiness.  
Thus mind and body are harmed  
By wrong conceptions and negativities.

Earlier on, we had looked at the divisions of mind generation. If you divide mind generation into four, then there is the mind generation that is associated with the path of seeing. This is the mind generation of pure resolve and is basically the mind generation in the continuum of bodhisattvas. Because of having that mind generation, they have abandoned the non-virtues of body, speech and mind, which are essentially the main causes of experiencing physical pain. Because they have abandoned the causes of physical pain, so even when these bodhisattvas cut and give away their body, they don't experience any physical pain.

The bodhisattvas on the first ground have perceived the meaning of selflessness directly. Therefore they are expert and skilled in seeing the truth or reality directly. As such, even when they give away their body, they don't experience any mental suffering.

For the rest of us, we are not superior bodhisattvas. If we give away any part of our body, we will feel both physical and mental pain and suffering.

- We experience physical suffering because we have not yet abandoned the negativities such as killing, stealing and so forth. So when we cut and give away our body, we will experience physical pain.
- Because we have not yet abandoned the intellectually acquired afflictions,



therefore we experience mental suffering. People like ourselves hold on very strongly to and grasp at the 'I' and 'mine'. Therefore we have the bases for experiencing mental pain and suffering if we were to give away our body.

In the *Supplement to the Middle Way*, Chandrakirti said that when superior bodhisattvas hear someone requesting them to give away their body, they feel so happy and experience immeasurable joy.

It is said that the joy that such bodhisattvas experience just by hearing such a request far exceeds the joy that is experienced by the hearer and solitary realizer foe-destroyers (or arhats) while in their meditative equipoise on the ultimate nature of reality. During that time, those arhats are in a very peaceful state. But the joy that the bodhisattvas experience when they hear the request for their body to be given is said to exceed even the joy that is experienced by the arhats at that time.

It is said that if those bodhisattvas get to actually offer their bodies, they experience even more happiness. The joy that they experience then greatly exceeds the joy that they experience from hearing the request for their bodies to be given.

In the discussion in the stages of the path to enlightenment, when it comes to the practice of giving, there are an appropriate time and an inappropriate time. One has to be skilful and know when the appropriate time and inappropriate time for giving are.

It is an inappropriate time to give when one has not reached that level yet. Although it is true the body is by nature dirty and filthy, nevertheless one should not look down on the body and not take care of it. In fact, as a practitioner, it is said that one has to guard the body because one needs it as the basis to practise the Dharma but one has to guard it without any attachment to the body. One guards it for the purpose of practising the Dharma.

Then when the time is appropriate and one is at that level of practice, then it is alright to give away the body. To give away the body when the time is inappropriate will not bring about any benefit for oneself or others.

*Khen Rinpoche: So if someone asks you (for your body), please don't give it. If somebody comes and asks for your hand, you can shake his hand but ... (Laughter).*

Verse 7.28

If their bodies are happy due to their merits  
And their minds are happy due to their skill,  
Then, even if they remain in cyclic existence for the sake of others,  
Why would the Compassionate Ones be disheartened?

Verse 7.29

Due to the strength of the mind of enlightenment,  
He exhausts his previous negativities  
And gathers oceans of merit.  
Hence he is said to excel the hearers

Remember in Chapter One of this text when the mind of enlightenment was discussed, one of the many benefits of generating the mind of enlightenment is that once that mind is generated, even the most powerful negativities can be purified.

Another benefit of having generated the mind of enlightenment is that once that mind is generated, henceforth even when one is distracted and lying down, one's merit continuously increases.

There is also a verse that says whatever kind of happiness you want, whether it is samsara or enlightenment, those kinds of happiness come from meditating on bodhicitta.

*Khen Rinpoche: There is one verse (that says this). Can you remember? I cannot find that verse.*

Verse 1.8

Those who wish to destroy the multitudes of sufferings of existence,  
Those who wish to dispel the unhappiness of sentient beings,  
And those who wish to enjoy multitudes of happiness,  
Should never forsake the mind of enlightenment.

“Those who wish to destroy the multitudes of sufferings of existence”: Whatever samsaric problems or sufferings can be vanquished by bodhicitta.

“Those who wish to dispel the unhappiness of sentient beings”: If one wishes to dispel whatever problems and sufferings sentient beings have, the method is to generate the mind of enlightenment.

“And those who wish to enjoy multitudes of happiness”: Whatever happiness one wants to enjoy and whatever happiness one wants others to enjoy, the method to achieve such happiness is again to generate bodhicitta.

The “multitudes of happiness” here is primarily the happiness of omniscience or full enlightenment which is achieved through the meditation on bodhicitta.

Those who wish for all these things “should never forsake the mind of enlightenment.” This means that one should always meditate on bodhicitta.

I think I did mention to you that you should memorise this verse.

Through the generation of the mind of enlightenment, one is able to easily exhaust the hosts of negativities and one is able to finish the accumulation of the collection of merit. As such, the practice of one's path greatly excels that of the hearers' path.

Verse 7.30

So, having mounted the horse of the mind of enlightenment  
That dispels all disheartenment and weariness,  
And proceeds from happiness to happiness,  
Which ones who know of this mind would lapse into despondency?

It is said that those who really understand the extensive benefit of having generated bodhicitta will never get discouraged from meditating on bodhicitta and will never get discouraged from cultivating the bodhisattvas' deeds. The teachings say this is how it is impossible for them to feel discouraged.

Up to here is the advice of the methods on how to deal with the laziness of being disheartened about virtue.

With that we have covered the 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

Now we have finished looking at the three types of laziness and the recommended antidotes and remedies. What remains to be done is for everybody individually to go back and look at the antidotes, try them out and see whether they actually work or not. So that is what remains to be done.

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*Question:* I refer to the bodhisattvas on the path of seeing who is cutting his flesh to give away to someone who requested for it. How does one link someone, who has abandoned negativities such as killing, not experiencing physical pain and someone, who has abandoned the intellectually acquired afflictions, not experiencing mental suffering. What is the precise reason to explain the two links?

*Answer:* You are aware of the accumulation of the two collections, are you not?

The bodhisattva accumulates the collection of merit and the collection of wisdom:

- The collection of merit results in the form body.
- The collection of wisdom results in the truth body.

The perfections of generosity, ethics and patience are classified under the collection of merit. Through the accumulation of merit through the practice of these perfections, it is said that one enjoys physical bliss as in stated in Verse 7.28, "If their bodies are happy due to their merits."

It is said that depending primarily on the perfection of wisdom, one accumulates the collection of wisdom, which is the cause of the dharmakaya, the truth body. "And their minds are happy due to their skill": The superior bodhisattva experiences mental bliss primarily because of his perception of the truth, i.e., the direct perception of selflessness.

If you compare non-virtue and the apprehensions of self, non-virtue is coarser and by committing non-virtue, one experiences bodily suffering. When we talk about non-virtue, essentially this refers to a non-virtuous mind.

So, "If their bodies are happy due to their merits," i.e., that bodily bliss is the result of their collection of merit, then the opposite to that must be that the accumulation of non-virtue results in bodily pain.

If you compare physical and mental suffering, mental suffering is more acute than physical suffering because mental suffering is difficult to get rid of. Because of the apprehension of the self, then non-virtue arises. The root of all our problems, especially mental unhappiness, is due to what we call the ego or the apprehension of the self. Until we overcome the apprehension of the self, then there is no way to overcome the mental unhappiness and mental suffering. As such, there is a need to generate the antidote to such self-grasping.

*Khen Rinpoche: Am I answering your question or not? (The answer is) As simple as that!*

The essence of the answer is that in dependence on the collection of merit, one achieves the rupakaya, the form body, and in dependence on the collection of wisdom, one achieves the dharmakaya, the truth body. Then you think about it.

*Khen Rinpoche: From there, you elaborate for yourself, the relation between non-virtue, the wisdom realize emptiness, ... I don't know how to combine them together. I think (the answer) something like that. If you think more, maybe you can find answer somewhere in there.*

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