

**Transcript of the teachings by Khen Rinpoche Geshe Chonyi on  
*Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds, 2014***

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**Lesson 46****28 August 2014**

Relationship between the four types of joyous effort and the four powers

**CHAPTER SEVEN: VERSES 7. 52 –7. 59**

Increasing the strength of joyous effort—the antidote

- A. Increasing the strength of the conditions conducive to joyous effort
  - 2. Extensive explanation
- B. The power of stability
  - 2. Being proud of one's capacity (V. 7.52 – 7.59)

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FOUR TYPES OF JOYOUS EFFORT AND THE FOUR POWERS**

The favourable conditions for the generation of joyous effort are the four powers:

1. The power of aspiration (or the power of esteem)
2. The power of steadfastness (or the power of stability)
3. The power of joy
4. The power of relinquishment (or the power of suspension)

Of these four powers, we have finished with the power of aspiration. In short, whatever practice we are going to undertake, the success of that practice comes about on the basis of having the strong aspiration or yearning for the outcome or goal of that practice. On the basis of this power of aspiration, the power of steadfastness (or stability) follows.

There are also different types of joyous perseverance.

Is there then a link between the four powers and these different types of joyous effort? This is something we should analyse and think about.

I would think that there is a relationship between the first power, the power of aspiration, and the armour-like joyous effort. This is because the armour-like joyous effort is a form of joyous effort that is developed or generated *prior to* engaging in the actual activity or practice that one has decided to do. Having this strong belief in and aspiration for the goal to be achieved through the chosen practice, one then produces a very strong enthusiasm and joy in one's heart. This occurs prior to actually engaging in whatever practice one is going to do.

This is something that you can think about: Is there any connection or relationship between the armour-like joyous effort and the power of aspiration?

Then there is the power of steadfastness or stability that is applied when one is actually engaging in that virtue. So there is a relationship between the power of stability and the joyous effort of application. What is the joyous effort of application? The joyous effort of application is the mind of enthusiasm and delight that is experienced while one is actually engaging in virtue.

In our earlier discussion on the power of stability, we were advised to consider carefully before we undertake any endeavour, in this case, virtue. We should analyse and think carefully whether we can do the task and whether we will be able to complete the task. After having made the decision and started on the chosen practice, the power of stability is used to apply oneself to such virtue until one brings the practice to completion. I would think that this is the relationship between the power of stability and the joyous effort of application.

The joyous effort of non-inferiority or non-discouragement is also sometimes called the joyous effort of non-disturbance in that the mind is not disturbed. In my own view, there is also a relationship between this joyous effort of non-discouragement and the power of stability.

While accumulating virtue or engaging in a particular practice, it is possible that along the way, you may feel discouraged or your mind is disturbed for whatever reason. At that point, it is especially important to calm yourself down to generate the extraordinary courage required. That means you need to have extraordinary enthusiasm for the practice that you are already doing so that you can continue with that practice and bring it to completion. This is what I think. You have to analyse and think about this.

The fourth type of joyous effort is the joyous effort of non-complacency or non-contentment. I think there is a relationship between the joyous effort of non-contentment and the power of joy.

The joyous effort of non-contentment is a mind that is enthusiastic about virtue and is delighted with the practice but it is a mind that is not easily contented. It is a mind that doesn't allow you to feel, "I have already done this," i.e., it may be a very small practices but you feel satisfied with that. Rather it is a mind of delight and enthusiasm that is not satisfied with what one has achieved but strives to do more. I would think that maybe that is the relationship between the joyous effort of non-contentment and the power of joy.

As for the power of relinquishment (or the power of suspension), I'm not exactly sure but perhaps one can relate this power to the joyous effort of non-discouragement. I cannot say for sure but when you think about it, one can come up with an explanation and can reasonably make a connection between the power of relinquishment and the joyous effort of non-discouragement.

In order to be able to make a connection between these things, first we must know what the four powers are on their own. Then we also need to know the four types of joyous effort. On the basis of knowing these two sets of phenomena, we can then analyse to see whether there is any connection between them.



We were looking at the power of steadfastness or stability and in particular we were looking at the three types of pride:

1. pride of karma (or action)
2. pride about ability (or being proud of one's capacity)
3. pride about afflictions (or being proud of the afflictions)

In developing the power of stability, one has to cultivate these three types of pride.

I think the pride of action essentially means that whatever virtuous action or karma that one is accumulating or creating, one has this idea, "I'm going to do this on my own. I don't need any friends or companions to accompany me along the way nor do I need their help. I would rather do this on my own." This is the pride of action. It is essentially a very strong kind of courage, i.e., the determination, "I will do this by myself *alone*."

You must understand the context for this discussion. We are talking here about the trainings of the bodhisattvas. Of course, bodhisattvas already have the wholehearted resolve, i.e., they have already taken on the personal responsibility to accomplish the welfare of sentient beings. They always have the thought, "I will do this by myself alone."

One needs this pride about one's capacity or ability without which there will be problems. What are the faults for not having the pride about one's capacity?

### **INCREASING THE STRENGTH OF JOYOUS EFFORT —THE ANTIDOTE (cont'd)**

#### *A. Increasing the strength of the conditions conducive to joyous effort*

##### *2. Extensive explanation*

##### *B. The power of stability*

##### *2. Having undertaken joyous effort, stabilizing its engagement*

##### *B. Explaining each individually*

##### *2. Being proud of one's capacity*

##### *A. The shortcomings of taking no pride in one's capacity*

Verse 7.52

When encountering a dead snake,  
Even crows will act as though they are garudas.  
If I am weak  
I shall be harmed by even a small downfall.

Verse 7.53 a, b

How do the faint-hearted who have given up exerting themselves  
Find liberation from destitution?

*Khen Rinpoche*: I don't know how the example works here, crows acting like garudas? What does that mean? What is the text trying to tell us from this example? Does anyone have any ideas?

*Student 1:* The crow wants to eat the snake. As the crow knows that the snake is already dead, it is no longer afraid and becomes braver than a garuda. So the example means that if I am weak and not like a garuda, I will be defeated by a small downfall.

*Student 2:* The translation I have here says, “When crows encounter a dying snake,/ They will act as though they were eagles./ Likewise if my self-confidence is weak, I shall be injured by the slightest downfall.”

The analogy is that normally the crow is fearful of the snake for whatever reason. Because the snake is already weak, either because it is dying or already dead, therefore the crow can pretend to be very courageous like a garuda. They have a lot of confidence because they know that the snake can no longer harm them.

I wonder whether the analogy of the dying snake could refer to the task that we actually have to apply ourselves to. Those tasks are not as difficult as we think they are, but if our self-confidence is weak, then we don't think we could tackle those practices. Then we will be injured by the slightest downfall.

*Khen Rinpoche:* Now everybody is acting like the crow. (Laughter).

*Student 3:* My thinking is that the dying snake is like our self-confidence and the crow is actually the downfall. For example when our self-confidence is like a dying snake, it is as if our confidence is actually weakening. Then the crow is the downfall that can actually attack us.

*Khen Rinpoche:* See, for this one example, different people give different commentaries and have different understanding. I also don't know exactly. Her (Student 3) idea is totally different from that of the two (earlier) students. Her idea is the opposite.

Here the meaning is that in order to vanquish the afflictions, one must have very strong courage and the pride about one's capacity, thinking, “I can vanquish the afflictions. I can definitely do it.” You need to have that kind of courage. If one's courage is small and weak, one will be affected by even a small downfall. If one doesn't have the pride about one's capacity and one's courage is weak, even a small fault or mistake can throw one into the lower realms.

Whether it is accomplishing virtue or abandoning non-virtue, if one's determination is weak and one doesn't have courage then one will not be able to abandon non-virtue and one will not be able to accomplish virtue. As such, one will be harmed in this life and in future lives and it will be difficult to break free from cyclic existence to achieve freedom and liberation. That is the meaning.

Based on that meaning, how then should one interpret the analogy as the analogy has to fit with the meaning? If that is the case, what Student 3 had said may be applicable in that the dead snake here could refer to one's lack of determination or courage. If one does not have any determination or courage, even a small little bird like a crow can harm it.

*Khen Rinpoche: Does that make sense?*

*Student 4:* I am thinking that it is the other way round. The small downfall is like the dying or dead snake. That means it is easy to attack it. When you meet a small downfall, you can easily overcome it. But if you don't have determination, when difficulties come, you will run away. In the first place, you had started out without the right mind-set, recognising, "This is like going to be difficult." Then if you don't have strong perseverance, whenever a small downfall comes along—that is like the dying snake or dead snake—you can easily overcome it but when the greater difficulties come along, you cannot overcome them.

*Khen Rinpoche: What is the dead snake representing?*

*Student 4:* A small downfall.

*Khen Rinpoche: The crow? It is yourself?*

*Student 4:* Yes. That means if you don't have determination, you can only overcome a small downfall like the dying snake. When you meet a small downfall, you act as if you are like a garuda. If you don't develop self-confidence right from the beginning, knowing that the task ahead is going to be difficult, then you can only overcome slight downfalls like the dying snake.

*Khen Rinpoche: OK. I didn't really get you exactly. Anyway I don't know exactly which way is better.*

The pride in one's capacity is the confidence in one's ability to vanquish the afflictions. If one has strong confidence in one's ability to vanquish the afflictions, one will not be harmed by even great downfalls. But if one doesn't have any confidence or if one's courage is weak, then one can be harmed even by small downfalls. Then you don't have to talk about the big downfalls. Even the small downfalls can cause harm.

In Gyaltsab Je's commentary, Verses 7.52 and 7.53 a, b come under the outline, "The shortcomings of taking no pride in one's capacity." If you think about how the outline is phrased and then the example given, usually crows will have difficulties dealing with or taking advantage of snakes. But if the snake is dead, then the crows can do whatever they want with it. Likewise I guess it means that if one's determination, confidence or courage and one's pride about one's capacity is non-existent or is very weak, then one can be harmed by even something very insignificant.

*B. The benefits of taking pride in one's capacity*

Verse 7.53 c, d

By generating pride and exertion,  
Even the great will find it hard to overcome me.

Verse 7.54

Therefore with a steady mind  
I shall overcome the downfalls.

If I am defeated by a downfall,  
My wish to be victorious over the three realms will become a joke.

By generating the pride about one's capacity, one applies and exerts it in confessing one's negativities and restraining oneself from all the downfalls. As such, one will not be harmed even by great downfalls and one will not be thrown into the lower realms. By generating this pride about one's capacity, one can even overcome the root downfalls.

Without this pride about one's capacity, without such confidence, one will be harmed even by small downfalls. Then at the same time, if one were to say, "I want to achieve the state of omniscience, full enlightenment and I want to conquer the three realms," that would become a joke.

*C. Abiding in pride as an antidote*

Verse 7.55

I will conquer everything  
And nothing at all shall conquer me!  
I, a son of the Lion-like Victor,  
Shall dwell in this pride

I guess "I will conquer everything/ And nothing at all shall conquer me!" means "I will abandon all the afflictions and all the objects of abandonment. I will do this."

"I, a son of the Lion-like Victor,/ Shall dwell in this pride": Here it says, "I will abide in this pride about my own ability like the child of the Victorious One, the Buddha, who has overcome or vanquished the four maras."

This section is on being proud of one's capacity, the pride about ability, which essentially is the courage and confidence in one's ability to vanquish the afflictions, thinking, "I am going to vanquish the afflictions and I can vanquish the afflictions. I am able to do this." It is this kind of confidence.

The next section talks about why it is wrong to follow after afflicted pride, i.e., the pride that is an affliction.

*D. It is unreasonable to be proud of the afflictions*

*1. Decrying pride in the afflictions*

Verse 7.56

Any migrating being is destroyed by pride.  
Afflicted, he has no pride.  
Those with pride do not succumb to the power of the enemy.  
They have come under the power of the enemy of pride.

The three types of pride that we were just talking about are:

1. the pride of action
2. the pride about ability (or being proud of one's capacity)
3. the pride about afflictions (or being proud of the afflictions)

These three types of pride are not the pride that is one of the six root afflictions, although the word is the same. The pride that is a root affliction is an object of abandonment, whereas the three types of pride that were just discussed here are not objects of abandonment.

We talked about the fully completed Buddhas, the foe destroyers or the arhats. They have vanquished the enemy of the afflictions, which include the affliction of pride. The pride about afflictions (or being proud of the afflictions) is the kind of pride that the bodhisattva cultivates. This is not the pride that is a root affliction. It is essential that the bodhisattvas cultivate this pride about ability so that they can vanquish the afflictions. This pride is not an afflicted pride, nor an object of abandonment. In fact, they need this pride about ability because when they generate this pride, they can also vanquish the ordinary afflicted pride.

You need to know that there is a difference between the ordinary pride, i.e., the pride that is an affliction, and the pride about ability that we have been talking about. Although it is called the pride about ability, it is not the actual afflicted pride. So, you must not confuse these two kinds of pride: pride about ability and afflicted pride.

There is a difference between the pride about ability and the ordinary pride in terms of what they do to the mind. The pride about ability is the confidence that thinks, “I *can* vanquish the afflictions and I *will* vanquish the afflictions.” With this pride about ability, the mind doesn’t come under the control of the afflictions.

But when afflicted pride manifests, the mind comes under the control or the influence of the afflictions. That will lead to many problems. As such, it is wrong to follow after ordinary or afflicted pride. What then are the faults of ordinary or afflicted pride? What do they do to us?

### *2. The disadvantages of that*

Verse 7.57

Inflated by afflicted pride,  
I shall be led by pride to the bad migrations.  
It destroys the joyous festival of being human.  
I shall become a slave, eating the food of others<sup>1</sup>,

Verse 7.58 a, b

Stupid, ugly, feeble,  
And despised everywhere.

These are the faults or problems of following after pride.

### *3. The reasonableness of abandoning it*

Verse 7.58 c, d, e

Tough people inflated by pride  
Are also included among those having pride.  
Tell me, what is the inferior like!

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<sup>1</sup> Ven. Gyurme explains “eating the food of others” refer to leftovers.

It is said that if the mind is puffed up with arrogance or pride, such people can never taste the Dharma. They will be despised by others and will become lowly persons.

This afflicted pride or ordinary pride is *not* the pride about ability that is cultivated by the bodhisattvas. Why? Because if you were to say that, then you will not be able to find anybody on earth who would say that it is difficult to cultivate the pride about ability. I guess this is what is meant by the last line of Verse 7.58, “Tell me, what is the inferior like!”

The next verse talks about the benefits of having the pride about ability.

*E. The benefits of pride as an antidote*

Verse 7.59

Whoever seizes pride in order to conquer the enemy of pride,  
He is the one having pride, the victorious hero.  
Whoever definitely destroys the rampage of this enemy of pride,  
Completes the results of a Victor in accordance with the wishes of  
migrating beings.

This is the advice on how to generate the pride about ability in order to vanquish the afflictions.

“He is the one having pride, the victorious hero,” refers to the person who has very strong pride about ability. The person who develops this pride about ability to vanquish or conquer his own afflictions is a hero. She is called a hero because she sets out to vanquish or conquer her own afflictions. People who act in such a way to vanquish their afflictions achieve the provisional goal of high status and the goal of definite goodness, i.e., liberation and full enlightenment.

With that, I have finished with the pride about ability.

In short, there is a big difference between the pride about ability and normal afflicted pride. One should not confuse the two. The pride about ability is something to be cultivated and afflicted pride is an object of abandonment. Cultivating the pride about ability brings many benefits. But if one follows afflicted pride, then there are hosts of disadvantages and faults. As such, the bodhisattvas cultivate the pride about ability.

Having said all this, maybe you can think about this: What is the difference between the pride of action and the pride about ability?

*Khen Rinpoche: That is the question. Can anybody help? Does anybody have the answer on what is the difference between these two?*

*Student 5: The pride of action refers to determination and the pride about ability refers to confidence.*

*Khen Rinpoche: So the first is determination and the next one is confidence. Good. Does anybody have any other idea?*



Next is the section on the third type of pride, which is being proud of the afflictions or the pride about afflictions. Earlier on with respect to the pride about ability, that is a confidence in being able to vanquish the afflictions. It is a very strong determination thinking, “I will vanquish the afflictions.”

Then on the basis of that pride, when one engages in vanquishing the afflictions, at that time there is also a very strong determination thinking, “I will not let the afflictions affect me. I will not let them take hold in my mind at all. Rather I will destroy them completely.” That is the pride about afflictions. So it is a very stable determination and courage.

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*Question:* I would like to clarify whether the four types of joyous effort:

1. the armour-like joyous effort
2. the joyous effort of application
3. the joyous effort of non-discouragement
4. the joyous effort of non-contentment

can be classified under the three types of joyous effort which are:

1. the armour-like joyous effort
2. the joyous effort of gathering virtue
3. the joyous effort of acting for the welfare of living beings?

*Ven. Gyurme:* In short, you are asking whether the four types of joyous effort can be subsumed into the three types of joyous effort?

*Answer:* Whether it is the armour-like joyous effort in the three-fold or four-fold divisions of joyous effort, they are the same thing and it is related to the power of aspiration. The armour-like joyous effort is the mind which occurs prior to engaging in any virtue. Based on that, then you engage in virtue.

Then there is the joyous effort of application. When you are joyously applying yourself to something—you could be starting on a particular practice, gathering virtue, acting for the welfare of sentient beings—then the power of stability becomes very important.

Whether you are engaging in virtue or working for the welfare of sentient beings, you need the pride of action, the pride about ability and the pride about afflictions. You need the power of stability and these three types of pride in order to be able to complete that practice or virtue.

In order to complete that virtue or practice, the power of joy and the power relinquishment (or suspension) also come in as well.

When we say we exerting joyous effort in virtue, what does this mean? That would mean that either you are gathering virtue, i.e., doing something virtuous, or you are doing something to benefit sentient beings. In order to be successful in this, we need the four powers.

Among the four types of joyous effort, you have the joyous effort of application, the

joyous effort of non-discouragement and the joyous effort of non-contentment. These occur when you are applying yourself in virtue. You have already engaged in or started the process, so these three types of joyous effort have to be cultivated when you are engaging in virtue.

Now if you think about it, you can make a connection between the three-fold division and the four-fold division of joyous effort.

You can already make a connection between the types of joyous effort and the four powers. The more information you have, the more there is to analyse. When there is more to be analysed, you can begin to see the connection between different things and your perspective becomes deeper and more expansive. Basically that comes from thinking.

*Student 6:* If I can simplify it a little bit, for the armour-like joyous effort, it is the same whether it is the three-fold or four-fold division.

But under the four-fold division of joyous effort—the joyous effort of application, the joyous effort of non-discouragement and the joyous effort of non-contentment—these can be grouped under the joyous effort of gathering virtue under the three-fold division. Of course these three also relate to working for the welfare of living beings.

*Khen Rinpoche:* To make it easy, prior to whatever virtue you are going to engage in, you must have a very strong interest and a very strong yearning for it. You must want it so much. Whether we call it armour-like joyous effort or the power of aspiration that is what is being referred to. That is why when you are thinking about doing something, to achieve it you must want it badly.

The armour-like joyous effort and the power of aspiration have to occur *prior* to the actual engagement in virtue. When you start to engage in virtue, that virtue could be either virtue as in gathering virtue or virtue as in the sense of working for others.

But whatever you set out to do—whether you are gathering virtue or whether you are working for the welfare of sentient beings—in order to complete that task, you need the other three powers:

1. the power of stability (or steadfastness)
2. the power of joy
3. the power of relinquishment (or suspension)

Whether it is gathering virtue or whether you are accomplishing the welfare of sentient beings, if you think of them in terms of the four-fold division of joyous effort:

- You need the joyous effort of application, i.e., you need to apply yourself to the task.
- Then you cannot be discouraged. So you need the joyous effort of non-discouragement.
- You need to enjoy doing the task at hand and you also need to strive to do even more. So you need the joyous perseverance of non-contentment.

With these three types of joyous effort, you are then able to complete the chosen task whether it is gathering virtue or accomplishing the welfare of others.

*Question:* In the presentation of the twelve links, projecting karma and actualising karma were presented. What is the role of completing karma there? In the presentation of the effects of karma, projecting karma and completing karma were presented. What is the role of actualising karma there?

*Khen Rinpoche:* Somebody come up to answer that question.

The question is: If we look at the presentation of karma in terms of projecting karma and completing karma, what is the function of actualising karma?

*Khen Rinpoche:* Come on. Those (students who have) already graduated (from Basic Program should answer this question).

*Student 7:* Actualising karma is very strong and it will make sure it will bring forth the effect of the projecting karma.

***Khen Rinpoche:*** I have mentioned before, after you have accumulated the projecting karma but in order to bring forth its effect, it must be nourished by craving and grasping. When that projecting karma is nourished by craving and grasping to the point when it is certain to give rise to its effect, it becomes ...?

*Student 8:* The projecting karma is no more during the time of the causal-period consciousness, so what karma is being nourished by craving and grasping?

***Khen Rinpoche:*** Essentially once projecting karma is accumulated, it ceases and does not exist. But the potential or seed of that projecting karma that was left in the mental continuum is nourished by craving and grasping.

It is complicated when we talk about completing karma. In Vasubandhu's *Abidharmakosa*, one accumulates many virtuous karma to be born as a human being. But it is stated in the text that one karma projects and the rest completes. It is also stated that one rebirth is not propelled by many karmas.

Then in the *Compendium of Knowledge (Abhidharmasamuccaya)*, the higher Abhidharma by Arya Asanga, the assertions are very different. He said that while one karma can project one rebirth, one karma can also project many rebirths. He also said that one rebirth can be propelled by many karma.

Anyway these are the statements to think about. In future we can discuss this further. This is what is mentioned in the texts. We can think about it and maybe next time we can analyse and discuss further.

In the next lesson, we should be able to finish the rest of chapter seven.

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