

**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 15****5 May 2016**

Review. Chapter 8. Verses 8.141—8.146: The way to practise after having reflected on this exchange— Extensive explanation.

*Khen Rinpoche: Has anyone thought about the last lesson? Does it make some sense? Listen one more time. I will explain again briefly. After that, you do your homework exercise. Because in the last lesson, I may have made some mistakes. I am not exactly sure myself. You need to think about it for yourself.*

*Student 1:* I understand the need to exchange myself with someone else. I don't need to change the object of pride or jealousy. The person can be the same. For example, if Mr. Smith is richer than me, I feel some jealousy. In my mind, I associate jealousy with Mr. Smith. There is no way I can feel jealous without linking my jealousy to someone.

If I were to make the swop now, Mr. Smith is less rich than me. Then when I'm thinking about Mr. Smith, I may feel some pride. Now in my mind, when I think about Mr. Smith, because of the past imprints, I feel some pride and some jealousy. Now, because of the meditation, I associate Mr. Smith with pride. So with the same object, I can have two feelings.

Because they are contradictory, they cancel each other out. My mind cannot decide anymore whether I am jealous of Mr. Smith or if I am proud of who I am compared to Mr. Smith.

*Khen Rinpoche: Good try. It is very good that you thought about this. That is wonderful. Anybody else? If you thought about it, then you can share your thoughts. If you hadn't thought about it, then you don't have to come up.*

*Student 2:* Last time when I heard this topic, I did not appreciate it. For me, it is mainly about empathy, seeing how the other party is suffering. I don't think I am getting the technicalities correct yet but rather, I'm talking about how I can see that this can benefit me.

When I see someone who is higher than me, I generate jealousy. By generating jealousy, I can go into the mind of a person who is jealous of me. He sees me as superior to him. I can then understand when a person is jealous of me. He is suffering and at the same time, he is also helpless.

This person is thinking, "You are up there, better than me but what do you have to be proud of? In your high position, there is no way that you will benefit me, yet you still feel proud." I can actually feel his suffering and his helplessness.

By seeing this, it helps me to overcome my pride. There is this quotation by Socrates, “If a person were to know the suffering of the victim, nobody will knowingly harm another.” This happens when the person that harms can empathise with the suffering of the victim. I feel this chapter helps me to understand this better.

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## REVIEW

*The exchange with those we consider to be our inferiors*

Let us use the first example. Usually, when we look at people who are lower than us, chances are that we will feel superior to these people. We feel proud. To overcome this, we meditate on jealousy.

Let us call the original person who feels proud, the ‘old self.’ The original ‘I’, the usual self or person that is cherished so much by our self-cherishing is the ‘old self.’ This is the ‘old self’ that we feel is the most important in the world, the one we cherish the most. This is the self that comes before we exchange our self with others.

When we exchange places with the inferior person that we look down on, we take on that identity and become that inferior person. This is the ‘new self.’

*Khen Rinpoche: Are you clear about this now? In the last lesson, I may have made a mistake between the ‘new self’ and the ‘old self.’ So you need to check this again*

So when you make the exchange, you take on the identity of the inferior person. Since you have exchanged places and taken on this new identity, you are a new person. It is no longer the usual self that was cherished by your self-cherishing. Rather this ‘new self’ is *not* the self that is cherished by your self-cherishing.

In the text, starting from Verse 8.141 onwards:

- “he” refers to the ‘old self’
- “we” refers to the ‘new self’

This is what I think to be the case. You must try not to be confused and mix the two up.

After you have exchanged places,

- you take on the identity of the inferior person. The ‘I’ that has become the inferior person is the ‘new’ person (‘new self’)
- the inferior person who has become the ‘I’ is the ‘old’ person (‘old self’)

*Khen Rinpoche: First, you must grasp this concept.*

Because you have taken on the new identity, you become ‘other’ and ‘other’ become you.

- The ‘I’ that has become ‘other’ is the ‘new self.’
- The ‘other’ that has become the ‘I’ is the ‘old self.’

*Khen Rinpoche: I thought about this for a long time about this. Still, sometimes I get it, sometimes I don’t.*

You need to understand this as this is the basis upon which we proceed to engage in the

meditation. During the exchange of self and others, when you see a person you deem to be inferior to you, the usual reaction is the feeling of superiority, arrogance and pride. When you exchange places with that person:

- the original or usual self becomes the inferior person. Since it has become something other than itself, it is called the 'new self.' 'I' have become the 'other.'
- the 'other' has become the 'I', the 'old self.'

Here, it is not simply a case of exchanging ourselves with a specific person such as an inferior person, a peer or somebody superior to us. When we talk about exchanging self and others, we are exchanging self with all other sentient beings. We do this with a mind free of conceptualization in the sense that we have no doubt whatsoever that we have become the other.

When we exchange places with sentient beings, we become *all* sentient beings. This is the 'new self' that has to be cherished and looked after, the self that is the most important thing in the world.

- The 'I' that has become all sentient beings is the 'new self'
- The sentient beings that have become the 'I' is the 'old self.'

Prior to exchanging the self and other, that self is the 'old self,' the self you cherished so much and considered to be the most important thing in the world. Prior to that exchange, the 'other' was to be discarded and neglected, not something to be cherished.

But after you have exchanged self with others and you have become all sentient beings, this 'new self,' becomes the most important thing. It is to be cherished and you strive to work for its happiness and to eliminate its suffering. After exchanging self and others, it is the 'old self' that you should neglect and discard. You should forget about achieving happiness for that 'old self.'

As such, I think the meditation exercise here is to feel jealous when the 'old self' has fame, power, reputation, gain and so forth. One is training to see the 'old self' as the object of jealousy.

One has to understand from every possible angle that self-cherishing is the root of all one's problems. With this understanding, one goes all out to discard and neglect the 'old self,' i.e., to do away with one's self-cherishing.

By understanding from every possible angle how cherishing the 'new self,' i.e., all sentient beings, is the source of all qualities and happiness, one goes all out instead to cherish and to benefit others.

This is something for you to think about.

Perhaps, there is a particular person in our life to whom we give all the most difficult tasks. If we were to exchange ourselves with that person, I guess one of the benefits is that we will know what it is like to be in that person's place. When we put ourselves in the shoes of that person, we will have some idea of the suffering of that person.

When we can feel how that person is suffering, then it is possible to generate some

compassion. That could make us stop harming that person.

In the same way, when we switch and take the place of the inferior person, then we know what it is like to be bullied, looked down upon and how terrible it feels. Also, we come to know how much pride the 'old self' has and how bad the 'old self' is. We will see that the 'old self' has so much pride and how it mistreats and looks down on others.

This will open up the possibility for change, for the 'old self,' i.e., you, yourself, to become a better person, with less pride and arrogance and so forth. It becomes possible for you to respect others.

So by exchanging places with the inferior person, the person you look down upon, you meditate on jealousy towards the 'old self.' It is definite that this will hurt the self-cherishing and weaken it.

This method of meditating on jealousy towards the 'old self' is said to reduce arrogance and pride.

#### **THE WAY TO PRACTISE AFTER HAVING REFLECTED ON THIS EXCHANGE—EXTENSIVE EXPLANATION (CONT'D)**

*The way jealousy for those higher than oneself is cultivated*

Verse 8.141

He is honored, but we are not;  
We have not found [possessions] as he has.  
He is praised, but we are disparaged;  
He is happy, but we suffer.

Verse 8.142

We do the work  
While he abides in comfort.  
He is renowned as great in this world,  
But we as inferior with no good qualities.

Verse 8.143

We have no good qualities; what to do?  
All of us are to be endowed with good qualities;  
There are those in comparison to whom he is inferior,  
And there are those in comparison to whom we are supreme.

“He is renowned as great in this world”: “He” here refers to the 'old self.' He has many followers and possessions and great wealth.

“But we as inferior with no good qualities”: “We,” referring to the 'new self,' on the other hand, is of a lowly lineage, “with no good qualities.”

“We have no good qualities; what to do?” Here, it is as if the 'new self' is asking the 'old self,' “I have nothing so why are you behaving so arrogantly towards me? Why do you look down on me?”

*Khen Rinpoche: Are you following this? Don't be discouraged. It took me a long time to work this out myself. I am still not absolutely sure I have got it. I thought of giving up many times but I kept on trying. I think there must be something to it if you think more and more deeply. I may still not be getting the point completely but there must be something to it.*

In general, having less or more qualities, being lower or higher, is relative. There is no definitive high or low. So you can take it that the 'new self' is telling the 'old self,' "It is relative".

*Khen Rinpoche: The 'new self' is talking to the old 'I'. I hope the old 'I' listens.*

"All of us are to be endowed with good qualities." The 'new self' says, "Even in comparison to me, there are some people who are lower than me. Relative to these people, I am endowed with good qualities. So I am still better in relation to some people." It is a matter of perspective.

"There are those in comparison to whom he is inferior." The 'new self' then tells the 'old self,' "Compared to some people, you are inferior to them. There are people who are better than you. So relative to them, you are inferior."

I think we can just leave it at that. We don't have to go through each and every single sentence as that will take a lot of time and maybe, there is the danger of mixing things up again.

*Question:* I refer to Verse 8.144 b, "He must heal us in whatever way he is able to" and Verse 8.145 a, "However we are not his objects of healing." This section about exchanging with the inferior person ends at Verse 8.146, "And wishes to harm the wise." Do these parts about "healing" and the "wise" have to do with Shantideva's own meditation on his 'old self' as a teacher and exchanging places with his disciples? I'm curious about Verse 8.146 that ends with, "Externally he is proud of his good qualities/ And wishes to harm the wise." I'm wondering whether the person who is doing the "healing" and the "wise" has to do with Shantideva himself as the spiritual master?

*Khen Rinpoche:*

Verse 8.144 a, b

The morality, views, and woes

Are not under our control but due to the force of afflictions.

Let's say the 'new self' is thinking, "Because of my degenerated morality and views, I am inadequate. This is why the old self is bullying me and looking down on me."

As I said earlier, we should not lose sight of the basis upon which we are doing this meditation. If that happens, we will be lost now. But if we are able to hold on to what we have discussed earlier—who the "he" and "we" are—then it is easy.

Verse 8.144 c, d

He must heal us in whatever way he is able to, and

Willingly we must accept any harm involved.

## Verse 8.145

However we are not his objects of healing,  
So why does he belittle us?  
What use are his good qualities to us?  
He has good qualities.

## Verse 8.146

With no compassion for the migrating beings  
Who dwell in the mouth of poisonous bad migrations,  
Externally he is proud of his good qualities  
And wishes to harm the wise.

So “we,” the ‘new self,’ says to the ‘old self,’ “Yes, my morality and views are degenerated. I am poor and inadequate. But I didn’t purposely set out to be this way. I don’t have control. Rather, I am overwhelmed by my afflictions. Since you, (the ‘old self’) are supposed to be like a bodhisattva, very good-hearted and superior to me, then you must do something to rectify my degenerated morality and views. You are supposed to help me out.”

“He must heal us, in whatever ways he is able to, and/ Willingly we must accept any harm involved.” The ‘new self’ continues, “If you do that, then from my side, I will accept any harm involved. If you help me, even if I have to bear with some hardships or some difficulties in the process, I will accept them.”

The ‘new self’ is telling the ‘old self,’ “You are not doing anything at all. You are not giving me food or clothing or alleviating my suffering in any way. You are not doing anything to heal, restore or help me. Yet, you are still arrogant and look down on me. You, a bodhisattva, are supposed to help me and I am willing to bear with the hardships. But you are not doing anything to help me. Yet, you still belittle me.”

This why the verse says, “However we are not his objects of healing,/ So why does he belittle us?”

The ‘new self’ is telling the ‘old self,’ “It is possible that you may have some good qualities but you are not doing anything to help me. What use are your good qualities to me? You have no wish to benefit me and to help remove my suffering. You are bad and full of faults. You don’t really have any qualities, yet you are still proud and pretend to have qualities. Not only that. You are arrogant towards those who really have qualities, especially the bodhisattvas.”

I don’t know whether what I have said so far is correct. I have given you my thoughts and a basis for you to work on. Based on that, we looked at how by taking the position of the inferior person, we can meditate on jealousy in order to overcome our pride.

You think about it and see whether it works and whether it is correct. I think you have got the idea now. If you have got it, then try it out for the meditations on competitiveness with regard to peers and the last meditation on pride with regard to those who are superior to us.

These meditations are placed under the outline of exchanging self and others in thought. It is not under the outline of exchanging self and others in action. It is said here that exchanging self and others in thought or attitude is an unsurpassed method for eliminating self-cherishing and for developing the thought of cherishing others. You have to think deeply how that is the case.

The few verses we have discussed relate to the meditation on jealousy to help reduce our self-cherishing. You have to think about it, work it out and meditate on it. Then you can see whether this meditation actually reduces your self-cherishing or not.

Specifically, it is also said that through exchanging ourselves with the inferior person and meditating on jealousy towards the 'old self' leads to the diminishment of our arrogance and pride. We have to see for ourselves whether that works or not.

There is also another explanation. According to this explanation:

- You replace the person that you usually look down on with an enemy.
- You replace the person who is higher than you with yourself.
- After that, you extract yourself from the situation and observe as a third party.
- You observe how the lower person, the enemy, is jealous of the higher person, i.e., you.

It is said that when you engage in this reflection—when the enemy in the lower position is jealous of the person in the higher position, i.e., yourself, and you are the observer—it makes the mind very uncomfortable and tight. You come to see the pain that jealousy brings to the mind. This pain will motivate you to do something about your own jealousy.

This reflection is only done at the level of mere imagination. Yet it can bring about so much discomfort in the mind. It goes without saying then that when you are actually jealous of someone else, that suffering is even more intense. As such, this reflection propels you to pacify your own jealousy.

Based on this example for the meditation on jealousy, see how you can extend this line of reasoning with an appropriate example to the meditations on competitiveness and pride.

The effect of this meditation on jealousy is different from what we have seen in the text. In the text, the meditation on jealousy is to pacify our pride. According to this explanation, this meditation on jealousy serves to diminish jealousy itself. This is the difference. As such, following this new example, the meditations on competitiveness will be to reduce competitiveness and the meditation on pride is to reduce pride.

I don't think I will go through the meditations on competitiveness and pride in class. If you have the interest, you can read the verses associated with these two meditations on competitiveness and on pride on your own. Think about it because if you think about it, they will be very beneficial for you.

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We will finish Chapter Eight before Vesak. This is the schedule. There is no class on

Tuesday, 17 May. Instead of 17 May, we will have class on Wednesday, 18 May. That will be the last class for this module on Chapter Eight.

We will start the new module on 7 June. For the rest of June, we will do the *37 Harmonies with Enlightenment* (or the *37 Aspects of the Path to Enlightenment*).

In July to October, we will do the *Tantric Paths and Grounds*. This module will be open only to students who have received a Highest Yoga Tantra great initiation.

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*Question:* Going back to equalizing self and others, is the prayer on immeasurable equanimity in *The Four Immeasurables* related with this practice of equalizing self and others?

*Answer:* In generating immeasurable love and immeasurable compassion, one is wishing and wanting others to have happiness and be free of suffering. Because others and oneself are equal in not wanting suffering and wanting happiness, therefore, we pray may they have happiness and may they be free from suffering.

*Question:* Relating to the exchange of self and others, in the example of exchanging oneself with the inferior person, the 'new self' is me exchanging position with the inferior person. The 'old self' is now the actual inferior person.

For example, I live in House A and the inferior person lives in House B. My understanding is that now, I go to House B and the inferior person comes over to House A. So House A is known as the 'old self' and House B is known as the 'new self.' I am doing the meditation at House B. Is that correct?

*Khen Rinpoche: Correct.*

*Student:* House A now is the inferior person and it also refers to the 'old self.' Is that correct?

*Khen Rinpoche: Yes.*

*Student:* In my meditation, that is no issue of that inferior person. I am just reflecting on my 'old self.' Correct?

*Khen Rinpoche: Correct. At the end of that exercise, the self-cherishing must be reduced. This means the meditation is done correctly. If the self-cherishing is not reduced, then the meditation is not correct.*

*Everybody has a different idea. A or B or this house or that house. You can make your chart, discuss more and make it clearer.*

*That is what I have been talking about. First, you must get the basic idea. You shouldn't confuse yourself with what I have taught. It was not exact in the last class but today, I think I have made it a little bit clearer. So, you stick with the basics. Based on that, then*



*you can have your own different ideas. But you must not lose sight of the basics. Of course, you still need to think about it.*

*I have thought about it myself many times but still I am confused. I am telling you this. I am not exactly, 100%, sure. When a few questions are asked, that clarity seems to disappear in my mind again.*

*So, we need to think about it, make a chart or whatever and then at the end, after meditating, see how that helps in reducing self-cherishing and increasing cherishing others. This is the result we are seeking. So everybody needs to think about that.*

**Question:** In this context, we were taught to meditate on jealousy to overcome pride, to meditate on competitiveness to overcome competitiveness and to meditate on pride to overcome jealousy. The qualm is that if we were to meditate on pride, competitiveness and jealousy, we will end up feeling jealous, competitive and proud. Won't that create the imprints for us to experience these afflictions in the future? I mean feeling jealous is feeling jealous, feeling competitiveness is feeling competitiveness. To me, it doesn't matter who the object of my pride or jealousy is.

The second question is this: Isn't it more straightforward to meditate on the faults of jealousy, the faults of pride and the faults of competitiveness to the point whereby we can feel mental anguish and pain.

Let's say when we feel that we are jealous or we know someone is jealous, at least we know the pain of jealousy. On our part, we try to reduce that jealousy and generate compassion for ourselves and for those who are jealous of us.

**Answer:** In general, it is clear that these three attitudes must be abandoned—pride, negative competitiveness and jealousy.

If you think about the meditation on jealousy, if you think about what we have discussed earlier more deeply, at the end of the day, it is not being jealous of somebody else. We are directing the jealousy at ourselves, asking ourselves, "Why me? I have all these good things in life, fame, reputation, power and so forth. It is not good. I should give them away to benefit others." We begin to feel this unease and discomfort that finds it unbearable to have all this power, fame, reputation, money and so forth just for ourselves. It is not right. These attributes should be used for the benefit of others.

The end result should be to promote that thought of benefitting and cherishing others. Your meditation must arrive at this result and conclusion. In this case, whatever we have, we give and dedicate to others. The whole idea is to increase the thought of benefitting others and at least to reduce and finally to eliminate our self-cherishing. In this context, this is the purpose of the meditation here.

In the case of the meditation on jealousy, we take the place of the inferior person. Then we become the inferior person and then we generate jealousy.

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