

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 17**12 May 2016**

Review. Chapter 8. Verses 8.167—8. 166. The way to practice application of this attitude—When practising the application of exchanging self and other, one should exert control over one's mind.

- There is the practice of exchanging self and others in thought
- There is the practice of exchanging self and others in action

The essence of exchanging self and others in action is holding a lower position and from that position, one works for the benefit of others. It is important for one to hold a lower position as that will enable one to respect others. One is then able to help them.

There was a question in the last lesson as to why this discussion on the practice of exchanging self and others, which is a way of practising bodhicitta, appears in Chapter Eight. This chapter talks about developing calm abiding. I think this discussion on exchanging self and others is the way to practise bodhicitta and this chapter presents an uncommon way of cultivating calm abiding.

- After equalizing self and others, one uses that result as the object of observation in the development of calm abiding.
- Likewise, after having exchanged self and others, one uses that as the object of observation in the cultivation of calm abiding.

This is what I think. This is the reason why the topic of exchanging self and others appears in Chapter Eight. This is something that we can all think about.

Does the bodhisattva who develops bodhicitta on the basis of practising the instructions of exchanging self and others need to realize emptiness prior to actualizing bodhicitta? I believe I had said before that probably, the bodhisattva who actualizes bodhicitta through exchanging self and others would have realized emptiness prior to realizing bodhicitta. This is something you can think about.

Even though in our earlier discussions we had said that this bodhisattva would have realize emptiness prior to actualizing bodhicitta, why is there such a qualm? This is because Chapter Nine, which comes after Chapter Eight, is the chapter on wisdom. If this bodhisattva who became a bodhisattva on the basis of practising exchanging self and others needed to have the realization of emptiness *prior* to that realization of bodhicitta, logically, we should have looked at the topic of wisdom *prior* to the discussion on exchanging self and others in Chapter Eight.

Student 1: If I am not wrong, Chandrakirti said compassion is needed in the beginning, the middle and the end. Maybe the need to generate bodhicitta even in the process of developing concentration had to be re-emphasised. For example, a bodhisattva who is on the small path of accumulation could still give up his bodhicitta. Therefore, there is a need to reinforce that bodhicitta itself. Even on the small path of accumulation, the bodhisattva on the path still need to practice the first five perfections. though it cover the first five perfections which technically bodhisattva on the path will have to engage on even on the small Path of Accumulation.

Likewise, there is the need to emphasize that even though one is a bodhisattva, one's bodhicitta still has to be strengthened. For the dull-facultied bodhisattva, there is probably also the need to start practising this exchange of self and others. That's why even concentration itself was emphasized. So basically this is to point out that even though one has started on the path, one still needs to work on one's bodhicitta.

Khen Rinpoche: I don't quite get what you are saying. Can you summarise?

Student 1: Why would Chandrakirti say that compassion is needed in the beginning, the middle and the end. The point is that even if you are on the path, you still need to constantly strengthen your compassion.

Khen Rinpoche: What does compassion have to do with our discussion here?

Student 1: I'm saying that if this is so for compassion, it will be likewise for bodhicitta that would mean that the rest of the path to the generation of bodhicitta should also follow suit, because that is exchange self and others.

Ven Gyurme: So bodhicitta is important at the beginning, middle and end, are you saying that?

Student 1: Yah, for the path of a bodhisattva is also important at the beginning, middle and end.

Khen Rinpoche: The beginning happens before the generation of bodhicitta or after?

Student 1: It happens before. Exchanging self for others occurs in the beginning, the middle and the end, just as compassion is also in the beginning, middle and the end.

Khen Rinpoche: That is OK.

Student 1: So you talk about bodhicitta, the benefit of bodhicitta at the beginning. Now right at the end of the fifth perfections, so called the perfection of concentration, it just to emphasize that there's a need. I mean it's just another thought

Khen Rinpoche: I don't know what you are trying to say here. I didn't really get it. Ya, okay it is beginning, middle, and we need that. The point is what you are trying to find?

Student 1: I guess is to actually to say that even though the person is on training may need to actually still enforce so called their training on bodhicitta per se.

Ven Gyurme: Enforce prior to stabilizing it ?

Student 1: Because if not, it is kind of strange. If the intended text is for bodhisattvas, technically this person would have bodhicitta, so why even talk about exchange self and others at the concentration chapter? This person would have bodhicitta anyway. He would have calm abiding in fact, so why talk about concentration? Emphasis on attachment, the faults of attachment per se. This person would have that. Just another thought

Khen Rinpoche: Okay, I didn't get exactly what you are trying to say. Anyway think about that.

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**THE WAY TO PRACTICE APPLICATION OF THIS ATTITUDE—WHEN PRACTISING THE APPLICATION OF EXCHANGE SELF AND OTHER, ONE SHOULD EXERT CONTROL OVER ONE'S MIND**

After having exchanged self and others, that individual must still take control over his mind, without letting the mind come under the influence or control of distractions and so forth.

*The way to annihilate brazenness*

Verse 8.167

Thus, you should [think] and abide in this way  
And not act so.  
If you transgress being under control,  
You will be subjugated.

Verse 8.168

However, although having been advised,  
If mind, you do not act in such a manner,  
Then since all faults will base themselves in you,  
You will only be destined to subjugation.

It is said that one needs to make the mind pliable and serviceable in order to be able to work for the benefit of others in both thought and action. If one does not control one's mind, one will end up working for others, but with a self-cherishing thought and actually looking after one's own interests. One must work for the purposes and benefit of others in both thought and action. There must not be any self-interest involved. There are many disadvantages and faults in working for one's own purpose. By understanding this, one should abandon the attitude of looking out only for oneself.

*The disadvantages of sticking solely to one's own benefit*

Verse 8.169

That previous time when you could overcome me  
Is different;  
I see it and now wherever you go  
I shall destroy all your arrogance.

Verse 8.170 a, b

Even now may I cast aside the intention thinking about  
"My own welfare."

Here, you are having a conversation with your self-cherishing. "In the past, I have followed you, self-cherishing. It ended up with you destroying me because I didn't realize that you were the root of all my problems. Now, I will not give you a chance to do this to me. Now, I have seen you for what you are. You no longer have no hold over me and I'm going all out to destroy you."

Verse 8.170 c, d

By having sold you to others,  
Without becoming discouraged, may I offer sustenance.

Verse 8.171

If, having become non-conscientious,  
I do not give you to all living beings,  
Then it is certain that you will deliver me  
To the guardians of the hells.

The conversation continues: "Now that I have exchanged myself with others, I do not belong to myself any more. I am owned by sentient beings. As such, I'm going to sell you to others. Without any regret, I offer my ability to help sentient beings in any way they wish." Here,

“selling” is like giving away to others. The point is that after having exchanged ourselves with others, we have given and dedicated ourselves to others.

**After having exchanged self and others, why do we need to dedicate and** give ourselves to others?

If we are not conscientious and follow our usual self-cherishing thought, focusing on our own welfare as before, it is certain that our self-cherishing thought will lead us to the hell realms, where there will be so much suffering.

Verse 8.172

For ages have you delivered me like this  
Whereby I have suffered lengthily;  
Now, recalling all my grudges,  
I shall overcome your intentions of self-purpose.

Verse 8.173

However, if I wish to be happy,  
I should not be happy with myself.  
However, if I wish to be protected,  
I should constantly protect others.

Our self-cherishing thought—the thought of working only for our own welfare and happiness—have delivered us to the hell guardians numberless times in the past. As a result, we had experienced so much suffering—being cut up, burnt and so forth. Recollecting this now, we hold a grudge against the self-cherishing thought and generate resentment towards it. With resentment, we generate the intention and desire to destroy the thought of working only for our own happiness.

If what we want is real, permanent, everlasting happiness, then we should not follow the thought of working for our own happiness. Rather, we should acquaint ourselves with the thought of working for others. If we wish to be protected, as Verse 8.173 says, “I should constantly protect others.” “Others” here refers to all sentient beings.

*Examining the faults of the body*

Verse 8.174

To whatever degree  
I take great care of this body,  
To that degree I shall fall  
Into a state of extreme anxiety.

Verse 8.175

Having fallen in this way, if desires  
Are unable to be fulfilled  
Even by everything upon this earth,  
What else will be able to [fulfill] desires of that?

Verse 8.176 a, b

Being unable [to fulfill them, and craving for objects of] desire,  
Afflictions and degeneration of attitude will arise.

These two-and-a-half verses are the answer to the qualm about having to take care of our body out of attachment in order to work for others. Some people may think, “I want to work for others. I need to have some attachment to this body, so I need to take care of it. Only then can I

work for others.”

We take care of our bodies because we have so much attachment to it. We spend so much money on buying clothes, food, the best cushion, mattress and pillow and whatever. Because of our attachment, even a small discomfort or little pain becomes a huge problem. We find it so unbearable. Is this not our reality now?

We may argue, “I have money and I can afford it. If I need more clothes, I will buy more clothes. If I need a better bed, I will buy a new bed. If I need more food, I will buy that too. I have money and I can solve the problem. If I feel any discomfort, I will make that discomfort go away.” But it is not about whether we have the money or not. We will buy and spend more out of attachment. The point is that attachment can never be satisfied. No matter how much we try, it will only get worse. If we follow after attachment, even if we own the whole world, we will not be happy and satisfied. As long as there is attachment, there will never be any satisfaction.

As mentioned in the lam-rim, the fault of samsara is that we will never be able to satisfy and fulfil our desires no matter how hard we try. If we don't stop following our attachment and desire, and we continue to crave or desire objects, it will only lead to the arising of more and more attachment and anger in our mind.

It will be also be very difficult for virtuous thoughts to arise in the mind. All the virtuous thoughts we may have already will degenerate. At the end of the day, what we are left with is just unhappiness. So these are some of the faults of being attached to the body. Therefore, it is correct to abandon any attachment we have for the body.

Verse 8.176 c, d  
One will not know the exhaustion of success  
Of not depending on anything.

Verse 8.177  
Therefore, I shall never allow an opportunity  
For the desires of the body to increase.  
Not holding to the attractive  
Is a good possession.

These verses talk about the practice of contentment. Contentment is important. We should be contented and happy with what we already have and not have expectations hoping for more. We should practice having few desires. We should not give any opportunity for our craving and desire for material gain, possessions and so forth to increase.

“Not holding to the attractive” in clothes or material goods “is a good possession.” Not grasping at them to be something wonderful is a good thing. It will be good if we use whatever we have, enjoy them and be content. If we can do that, life becomes easier. When there is no grasping, there will be no reason for regret later on. At the time of death, there will be no clinging to one's possessions.

Khen Rinpoche: Talking about branded labels, there is so much emphasis on them nowadays. Of course, these things are not cheap. In the first place, it is difficult to get the item. Once you get it, it is difficult to use it. You spend so much on it and carry it for only one day. Maybe in one year, you carry it for two days. For the rest of the over three hundred days, it is lying in the cupboard at home.

On top of that, you worry that it may be lost. Somebody may steal it. Then the worries will come. That is the problem. On the day you die, you have so much attachment to that item and you cannot let go. You die with strong attachment to that object so you die with that kind of mind.

There are so many stories about this. The person takes rebirth inside the bag or inside the object. You are thinking how a person can go inside a bag. It is possible. You can be an insect! You can imagine that.

The expensive bag you bought, when there is a tiny hole in it, your mind becomes so unhappy. But you don't have this attachment towards your cheap bag that you use every day. I am just giving an example. In the first place, you don't have so much attachment to it so it is easy to use. You can put here and there. You don't have to worry about it. Even if there is a little tear in it, it's OK. You are totally happy with that bag so you don't have any problems. Mainly, it is talking about this problem of attachment. A "good possession" is an object that you can use and enjoy without any strings attached. It doesn't give you any worries, problems or suffering because you are not attached to it. That is a good possession!

The next outline is called the fault of being motionlessness, the fault of not moving.

Verse 8.178

In the end it will turn to dust.  
Unable to move, it is propelled by another.  
Why do I hold onto  
This terrible unclean form as "self"?

Verse 8.179

Even when it is alive, it is better off dead.  
Of what use is this machine to me?  
How is it different from a clod of earth and the like?  
Alas, why do I not dispel this pride!

This body which is cherished so much by most people with so much attachment to it. So much time, effort and money were spend to up keep the body, but in the end, it will be cremated and then it will become ash. Actually in reality, the body itself, even when we are alive, is not something that is able to move on its own by nature. It is not its own inherent nature to be able to move even when we are alive. The reason why our body can move is due to the existence of another condition. This condition exists in the form of our wind and mind. Because the wind and mind is still in the body, that condition enables this body to move.

If you remember the earlier discussion on how the bodies is dirty by nature and it produces filth, so it is very dirty and horrifying.

Why do we hold onto this terrifying or dirty form as a self?

Why are we holding onto this terrifying filth factory as a self?

If we don't employ our bodies in virtue or use it to do something beneficial and virtuous then it is better off dead, because it is no difference from a corpse. So, if we don't use the body to engage in virtue then what difference is there between our body and soil and earth and rocks? As such why do we hold onto this body as a self and then be so proud? There is no reason at all to be proud.

We are deluded as to what is good and what is bad.

**c' The shortcomings of delusion**

**(1) Being deluded about right and wrong**

**(2) Being deluded about praise and defamation**

**(3) Abandoning objections to that**

**(4) Though craving after the body is the source of much wrongdoing, one must guard it in order to take the essence of the leisures and endowments**

**(1) Being deluded about right and wrong****Verse 8.180**

Having accumulated suffering for no purpose  
 Because of honoring this body,  
 Of what use is attachment and anger  
 For this thing that is similar to a piece of wood?

**Verse 8.181**

Whether I am sustaining my body in this way,  
 Or whether it is being eaten by vultures and the like,  
 If it has no attachment or hatred,  
 Why then am I so attached to it?

Because of our attachment to the body and in pursuing whatever we think we need to do for this body then we literally brought upon ourselves many kinds of problems and sufferings. We take care of the body out of attachment with so much time, effort and money on it but then when we die, in certain culture, it becomes food for animals such as the vultures.

At the time of death, when we are dead, the body doesn't kind of trying to repay our kindness by thinking or saying, "When I am alive you took care of me so much." The body doesn't repay our kindness in that sense that when it is burnt or eaten by the vultures, the body doesn't object by saying "No, no, no, no, you shouldn't be doing it to me".

The point here is that our body is in the nature of being deluded. It doesn't know what is good and what is bad. It doesn't know what is benefit and harm. Yet, we take care of it so much. We have been taking care of such a deluded thing, and we are attached to such a deluded thing.

**(2) Being deluded about praise and defamation****Verse 8.182**

If it knows no anger when derided  
 And no pleasure when praised,  
 For what purpose  
 Am I wearing myself out like this?

When the body is harmed or criticized, the physical body from its own side is not aware that it is being criticized. Neither it is aware when it is being praised. Since the physical body itself has no feeling, and has no awareness of being praised or being criticized, the question here is why do we tired ourselves up, and working so hard for this mindlessness thing?

Next is refuting any arguments in this regard

**(3) Abandoning objections to that****Verse 8.183**

OPINION: Anyone who desires this body  
 And I are friends.

RESPONSE: Since all desire their own bodies,  
 Why do I not find joy in theirs?

Khen Rinpoche: I don't know what it is saying in this verse. Do you have any idea?

[BP1: Even though we recognize that the body, from its own side, feels neither delight nor unhappiness nor understand the meaning of praise and criticism, we still feel, "This is my body. It is like a good friend and therefore, it is all right to protect it, out of attachment." This is how we think. If that is our justification, then everyone is the same as us in cherishing their own bodies. Why are we not doing anything to protect the bodies of others, thinking of them as "our bodies"? Since the concept of "I" and "others" do not exist from their own sides, when we analyze and try to find the "I" and the "other" we will not be able to do so. Therefore, we should protect the bodies of others as we do our own.]

Gyalsab Je presents the argument like this: Although the body itself does not understand this, I desire the body. I find it attractive. Then we are both friends. Therefore, I like it. If that is the case then since all sentient beings desire their own bodies, why do you not find joy in theirs?

I mean the answer is like as all sentient beings desire their body, so why does one not regards the bodies of others as mine and in happiness? The conclusion is therefore inappropriate to be

attached to one's body and yet deride the bodies of others.

This is kind of like talking about equalizing self and other, like there is no difference between self and other. We have discussed this a bit earlier on how as opposed to the usual sense of what we have about self and other, being very concrete and distinct entity. We have knocked down that concept earlier on. Since there is no inherently existing I, no inherently existing other, as such there isn't that distinct inherent difference between one's body and the body of other. As such, we should also cherish the bodies of others, protect and take care of it. Although craving for the body is the source of many faults, nevertheless, it needs to be protected in order for us to extract or take the essence out of this human life of freedom and endowments.

**(4) Though craving after the body is the source of much wrongdoing, one must guard it in order to take the essence of the leisure and endowments**

**Verse 8.184**

Therefore, in order to benefit migrating beings

I shall give away this body without any attachment.

Although this has many faults

I should uphold it like a worker's tool.

Therefore, it is inappropriate and unreasonable to be attached to our body and to work only for our own purpose. With the thought of doing extensive benefits for sentient beings, then we should dedicate our body to others, give it to others and use it as a servant for sentient beings to benefit others. This body is indeed the source of many problems, in that once we have this body, we have to take care of it, we have to give it food, cloth it and protect it from the elements. We also need a house for it. In order to give the body all these protections, we have to work so hard and then suffer so much.

It is just like how the plumber or the smith needs his tools to get the work done. Likewise, we need to protect this body without choice because it is a tool and necessity. If we want to benefit other sentient beings, we still need the body to benefit others although itself is by nature dirty. In order to maintain and to protect the body, it involves a lot of negativities and suffering. So if we need it to benefit sentient beings, then we still have to protect it.

Even just to take care of the body, in the process we have to put up with so many difficulties and to accumulate so much negativities. Despite accumulating so many negativities while taking care of the body and having endure with so many problems, if in the end we do not use our body to do something beneficial for others, to work for others then all those negativities and the hardships that would have been for nothing.

We have already accumulated so much negativities just to take care of the body but at least if we can use the body to benefit others, then at least something good comes out of it. If we are not careful and if we really don't know how to think such as don't know how to lead the life, then our body will become a platform or the transport to the lower realms. If we don't know how to lead our life and don't know how to think then this body becomes the platform, and is like the vehicle in which we are delivered to the lower realms. This is the cause if we don't know how to think or don't know how to lead life. When we know how to think and know how to lead our life then the same body can be the platform or the stage upon which we move towards liberation. So depending on whether we know how to think or not, the body can either be the boat that carries us to lower realms, the hell, or it is the boat that carries us to liberation, enlightenment.

Next is turning away the obstacles to virtue:

**4" Exerting control over the mind**

**a" Turning back obstacles to virtue**

**b" Developing the strength of effort in the antidote**

**c" Placing oneself in one-pointed equipoise upon a virtuous focus**

**a" Turning back obstacles to virtue**

**Verse 8.185**

So enough of this childish behavior!

I shall follow in the footsteps of the skillful,

Having recalled the advice concerning conscientiousness,

I shall turn away sleep and lethargy.



We have for numberless times engage in the childish actions of being distracted by the self-serving thought, we should have enough already. Instead we should now follow the good steps of the buddhas and bodhisattvas who are skilled, wise, and proficient with regards to what needs to be abandoned and what needs to be cultivated with conscientiousness and joyous perseverance. I should strive in giving up sleep and lethargy.

There are the five obscurations that are mentioned here in the teaching:

1. Attachment for sense objects
2. Doubts
3. Lethargy and sleep
4. Mental excitement and regret
5. Malicious thoughts (malice)

**b” Developing the strength of effort in the antidote**

**Verse 8.186**

Just like the compassionate Sons of the Victor,  
I shall bear the rigors of what is appropriate;  
If I do not make a constant effort day and night,  
When will my suffering ever come to an end?

The verse is saying that we should follow the example of the great compassionate one, the great bodhisattvas, by working hard to develop concentration through depending on the antidotes. We need very stable strong determination to do that. If we do not have strong determination to apply the antidotes consistently day and night then it will be very difficult to be free of suffering.

**c” Placing oneself in one-pointed equipoise upon a virtuous focus**

**Verse 8.187**

Therefore, in order to dispel the obscurations  
I shall withdraw my mind from wrong paths  
And constantly place it in equipoise  
Upon the correct object of observation.

This concludes the chapter on concentration. Therefore, in order to achieve the principal goal of eliminating all the obscurations, both the afflictive obscurations and knowledge obscurations, we need to actualize and generate special insight. Before that can be achieved, we need to achieve calm abiding. With that in mind, we need to turn our mind away from all the wrong paths such as following after desire, attachment and so forth. Therefore, by depending on the eight antidotes in order to abandon the five faults as explained in Maitreya’s *Differentiating of the Middle From the Extreme*, then we should place our mind and attention continuously on the correct object of observation.

Gyalsab Je summarizes the Chapter Eight in this verse:

*The destruction of the two obscurations from the root  
With superior insight to which reality is obvious or manifest  
Depend in turn on immovable concentration*

*Hence one should first become proficient in attaining calm abiding.*

**b. The chapter’s name**

The name of the chapter is Teaching Absorption (or Concentration)

Khen Rinpoche: How many months this chapter? How long we have been in this chapter? How long we studied this chapter, one month or two months or three months?

I will summarize Chapter Eight on next Wednesday.

Note: There will be no class on Tuesday (17 May) but there will be class on Wednesday (18 May)

Exam: Khen Rinpoche will give some exam questions on Wednesday. The exam is of open book questions. You can take your time but you must write but submit the answers on 7 June.

We have to have test and exam otherwise whether I should say “You would not open the book or the book would not open”. It is not going to be difficult. We have established the rule from day one and said very clearly that those of you who are interested to take the final exam with the final certificate, you must have taken every single exam from day one. As long as you missed one exam, you don’t even qualify to take the final exam. If you are on track towards the final

exam then you need to do all the exams.

The question will be given to you on Wednesday and you submit your written answers on 7th of June when we come back again for the next module. That is nothing difficult, just look at the book, think and write whatever you want. Just write something.

Interpreted by Ven. Tenzin Gyurme; transcribed by Phuah Soon Ek, Vivien Ng and Aki Yeo;  
edited by Cecilia Tsong.